THE VANAVAMALAI TEMPLE

AND

MUTT



TALAKAD KOTIKANNIKADANAM

D. RAMASWAMY TATACHAR, B. A.,

AUTHOR OF

'THE FORGOTTEN SHRINES OF AHOBILAM'

SUB-REGISTRAR

NANGUNERI

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ROJA MUTHIAH.

ARTIST:

KOTTAIYUR P. O.

RAMNAD DISTRICT.

MADRAS STATE.

PREFACE

When for the first time I visited this famous shrine and the more famous Mutt I was struck by the utter absence of any reliable information regarding their origin and growth. I took it into my head to supply this want. Unfortunately for me official preoccupations did not give me the needed leisure to look up to this arduous work of collecting materials of evidence from uninforming and impossible records.

Undaunted by all the obstacles I set about collecting the cadjan records in possession of some old families and I came across some useful pieces of information which goaded me on to push on the work in earnest. At this juncture I had to leave the place under official orders and the work had to be kept in abeyance.

I thought that it might after all be of some use to publish the scanty and available facts in my possession so that this booklet may form a nucleus for a more extended research by a better informed research worker having greater facilities for this kind of work.

One thing I am sure and that is that this booklet will save the tourist from carrying in his brain the load of absurd and stupid stories and

falsehoods he will be presented with by the uneducated guides who prey upon him the moment he enters the temple precincts. I can also assure my readers that all the useful and reliable materials available at Nanguneri have been perused by me and the future that may lose the opportunity of seeing these decaying records may not feel sorry for their disappearance.

Having been in this line of research for some years I have attempted in my own way to focus all the important facts in a readable fashion and any well meant criticism will be thankfully accepted.

I am thankful to Rao Sahib C. S. Srinivasachariar, M. A., of the Annamalai University for having consented to peruse the historical portion of this booklet.

Nanguneri,
20-12-36.

D. Ramaswamy Iyengar.

CONTENTS



THE TEMPLE IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

(BY RAO SAHIB PROF. C. S. SRINIVASACHARIAR, M. A.)

A

In almost every village, and certainly in every large village and town, there flourished a temple or more than one. The temple was in those times the busiest centre of the social life of the locality. At first temples were probably constructed in the midst of village groves, and some of our old temples have names like Vedaranyesvara, Vataranyesvara and Svetavanesvara, which show that temples were so called because they were situated in large groves.

The temple in its earliest form was made up of the innermost shrine or the *garbagriha* and two *mantapas* in front of it. The outer *mantapa* of these two was known as the *mukhamantapa.* The inner one, known as the *antarala mantapa*, was generally a passage leading to the central shrine. This simple temple was known by the name of *Trayanga.* Niches on the walls and sometimes portions or rooms in the sides of the *mantapas* house the numerous minor deities of the shrine. Later, the structure came to be built of five parts or *angas*, known as *Panchanga* — the technical names of these parts being known as *Kandappadai*, *Kumudappadai, Jagadippadai, Uttiram* and *Vimanam*.

The style of architecture that was adopted in the building of Tamil temples has been generally called Dravidian. The Shore Temple at Mahamallapuram (Seven Pagodas) near Madras is held to be the first definitive example of the Tamil style temple which

may be attributed to the 7th century, and which differed from the contemporary temple of the Kannada country, chiefly in its decorative detail, but to some extent in external form also.

The gradual development of the temple style of architecture in the Tamil country can be traced during the last 13 or 14 centuries. About the end of the 6th century, a taste for rock-cut temples had spread everywhere over the Pallava kingdom of Kanchi. This was perhaps derived from the rock-cut caves on the banks of the Krishna, as at places like Undavalli, Mogulrazpuram etc., which were the work of the Vishnukundins who ruled over the Vengi region of the deltas of the Godavari and the Krishna. The earlier Pallava cave-temples were excavated during the reign of Mahendravarman Pallava (*cir*. 600—630 A. D.) who is deemed to be one of the greatest figures in the history of Tamil civilisation. He gave a powerful impulse to the Saiva revival under the Nayanmars, glorified music and poetry and built the great tanks at Mahendravadi, Mamandur, Dalavanur and other places. The cave-temples at Mahendravadi, Pallavaram, Trichinopoly, Singavaram, Tirukkalukkunram, Mamandur and Dalavanur are attributed to his time. In the reign of his successor, the great Narasimhavarman Mahamalla (630—668 A. D.), more elaborate cave-temples were built; and the rock-sculptures, large bas-relief sculptural scenes engraved on the face of a cliff (*e. g*. the panel showing the so-called Arjuna's Penance at Mahamallapuram) and the monolithic free-standing temples commonly known as the *Rathas* (*e. g*. the *Pancha-Pandava Rathas* at Mahamallapuram) are also of his age.

In the next stage of temple development which has been generally styled as lasting down to about 800 A. D., rock-cut architecture ends; and structural temples, built of stone and usually of small size, are encountered. These had sometimes a brick superstructure and a lofty tower or *vimana*, rising in tiers over the main shrine (*e. g.* the Kailasanathaswami temple at Conjeeveram). The next stage of temple-building under the Pallavas covers the 9th century and is marked by the development of the apsidal-ended temple, similar in style to the *Sahadeva Ratha* at Mahamallapuram. This and the previous Pallava styles have been respectively named after the Pallava rulers, Aparajita and Rajasimha (*cir.* 700 A. D.) The period of Pallava temples ends with the final conquest of the Pallava kingdom and country by the rising dynasty of the Cholas of Tanjore, about 900 A.D. "It seems likely that the Cholas, in their original kingdom, already practised an allied—but in certain respects distinct — style of their own, presumably in perishable material; for with their supremacy marked changes in certain details make their appearance somewhat abruptly in surviving buildings. The supremacy of the Cholas (style of temple architecture) lasted for about 500 years; and throughout that time, a gradual evolution took place, resulting in such great differences, between the buildings of its beginning and end that it is convenient to divide it into an early and a later Chola period of 250 years each. This gradual evolution continued through the 250 year period of the Vijayanagar Empire by which the later Chola period was followed, and so on into the modern period." [Gravely — *An Outline of Indian Temple Architecture* (Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, New Series; Gen. Section, Vol. III. part 2.) — p. 13].

In the typical Pallava temple the structure had no *gopuras* over the gateways or had these smaller than the *vimana* over the central shrine. The early Cholas built much larger temples in which the *vimana* still continued to dominate the *gopura*, being in the case of the great Brihadesvara temple at Tanjore, built by Rajaraja the Great (985 – 1013 A. D.) of an immense size and of a noble pyramidical form. The temple at Gangaikonda Cholapuram in the Udaiyarpalayam taluk of the Trichinopoly District, was built by Rajaraja's son, the equally famous Rajendra Chola Deva, in memory of his victorious expedition to the Ganges. The Cholas of the later period did not touch the shrines of the existing temples and only busied themselves in enlarging the existing ones, more than in constructing new ones. They built immensely large gateway *gopuras* for comparatively small vimanaed shrines, as can be illustrated from the great temples of Tiruvannamalai and Chidambaram. Dr. Gravely assures us that the tradition of great gopuras thus established, has continued to remain in fashion since those days. The rulers of the Vijayanagara empire and their several Nayak governors who ruled at Gingi, in Tanjore and in Madura and survived their overlords for some time, continued, indeed, the Chola tradition of building huge outer walls and towering gopuras over the gateways in them; they also devoted their resources to the building of huge *mantapas* and vast corridors or *prakaras*, supported on double or multiple rows of monolithic pillars, as can be seen in the 1000-pillared halls in the Madura and Chidambaram shrines and in the halls and corridors of the great shrines of Big and Little Conjeeveram, of Madura, Chidambaram and Rameswaram. Thus both under the great Nayak rulers, and even later, the *mantapas* and

corridors were made very spacious and lofty; and these were added in many cases, to earlier temples in the form of additions. The decorative *motifs* seen in the pillars, corbels, niches etc., are seen to become more elaborate and complex in each successive stage of development.

B

Regarding the organisation of worship in the temple we have little information till we come to the time of the great Rajaraja Chola whose endowments to his favourite shrine at Tanjore were enormous and magnificent and included the greater part of the valuable booty that he acquired in the course of his numerous wars and conquests. The records containing these gifts and detailed instructions as to their utilisation were all engraved very carefully on the temple-walls, the walls of the central shrine being exclusively devoted to the recording of the gifts of the king and his elder sister. These inscriptions which contain an enumeration of his military achievements, show that though the king was a devout Saiva he displayed tolerance and enlightened patronage towards other religions. The king himself set up an image of Vishnu in the temple; and one of his officers set up the image of the Sun-God in it. Images of the Saiva Saints were set up in the temples of the country as early as the first half of the 11th century. Village deities and their shrines are mentioned in the records in connection with some villages whose revenues were assigned to the great Tanjore shrine. The temples of such village deities are designated as *Tirumurram* and are distinguished from orthodox Brahmanical temples to which the term *Srikoil* is applied. We come across other temples dedicated to Agastya, the 63

Nayanmars etc. The records of Rajaraja among the Tanjore inscriptions thus give us a great amount of information regarding contemporary religion and mythology and also ideas about the jewels and ornaments that were used for the gods. We have information from the inscriptions given in technical language about the different parts of the ornaments, the number of jewels set on each, their total weight excluding threads and lac and the approximate value of each.

We also learn that in those ancient days the persons who were in charge of the temple lands, money, live-stock and other properties and endowments brought to the temple at the stated times, their various offerings like ghee, oil, cleaned rice, vegetables, fruits, sandal-paste, incense, musk, rose-water and khaskhas; and all of them had to make a solemn promise that they would never fail in their duties. Those who cultivated the *devadana* lands on leases had to bring to the temple courtyard and at their own expense the stipulated quantities of grain and other produce. Temple service was efficiently performed and minutely divided. One of the Chola records of the 11th century describes the minutiae of the service in the temple of Durga at Kuvalalapura (Kolar); and it tells us that the following persons were employed for service in the temple:— a Siva Brahmana or Sivacharya to perform sacred worship; four Brahmin bachelors to do the attendant work; men to fetch sacred water, gather flowers and make garlands; two families to cultivate the temple flower-garden; three watchmen; four *yogins*, three *Bhairavas*, and four *Yogisvaras*, a singing troupe of ten persons, one accountant, twenty-four dancing girls, one potter, one washerman, one astrologer,

a superintendent, a carpenter, singers of the *Tiruppadiyam* and the *Tiruvaymoli* and a teacher to expound *Vyakarna.*

About the same time, *i. e.*, the 11th century A. D., a Brahman temple-servant was given for his wages two *kurunis* of paddy per day and four gold *kasu* per year; and the garland-maker was given the same quantity of paddy and an additional *kasu* per year. The temple accountant was given 200 *kalams* of paddy per year. The dancing master received as much as this; and a temple dancing-girl only half of this quantity. Drummers, parasol-carriers, lamp-lighters, washermen, braziers, jewel-stitchers, master-carpenters, ordinary carpenters and the superintendent of goldsmiths, all these received shares ranging from 50 *kalams* to 150 *kalams* per year. All these rates had references only to the great Tanjore Temple; and other temples in the country must have had servants getting tolerably approximate or somewhat lower allowances. In those days the necessary articles of daily consumption were purchased with paddy; and one measure of paddy could be exchanged for $\frac{1}{16}$ measure of ghee, or one measure of curds, 10 measures of areca-nuts, 20 plantain-leaves or $\frac{1}{16}$ measure of oil. The value of corn does not vary for long periods of time, though its price does; and we have to take it that the income of an ordinary temple-servant would, at the present time, be represented by the value of 100 *kalams* of paddy per year and that of a higher grade of employee double that quantity.

C

Grants were made to temples for the maintenance of alms-houses, for the repairs of breaks or cracks in

the temple structure and for the support of temple servants and of Brahmans learned in the Vedas. In the temple-*mantapas* the Vedas were chanted and expounded; and the great *Ithihasas* and *Puranas*, the *Dharmasastras*, grammar, rhetoric, logic, astrology and astronomy, medicine and other special sciences were taught to those that came to learn them. In the temple at Tiruvottiyur near Madras, *Vyakarna*, *Somasiddhanta* and Panini's *Mahabhashya* were taught, as attested by records ranging over a long period of time down to the reign of Kulottunga III, a Chola monarch of a later age. A Vaisya, Madhava by name, constructed the *Jananatha-mantapa* where, by a royal grant of Virarajendra Deva were established (1) a school for the study of the *Vedas*, the *Sastras*, grammar, *Rupavatara* etc ; (2) a hostel for students; and (3) a hospital. The students were provided with food, with bathing-oil on Saturdays and with oil for lamps. The staff and establishment of the school, hostel and hospital comprised of one physician, one surgeon, two servants for fetching drugs, supplying fuel etc., two nurses for the sick and one general servant. Thus temples became the natural centres of both sacred and secular learning and of popular lectures and expositions, as well as of hard, scientific and scholastic studies. One inscription makes a reference to the *Vyakarnadanamantapa* of the temple. An inscription of Rajendra Chola I, of a date not later than 1023 A. D., records a temple endowment intended for the maintenance of a college for Vedic studies and also of an attached hostel calculated to support 340 students. An epigraph of 1122 A. D. tells us that as many as 44 villages were donated to a temple for giving food and clothing to ascetics, teachers and students of the Vedas.

Colonies and *agraharas* of genuine and pious Brahmans were usually attached to temples. Record No. 277 of 1913 (Madras Epigraphist's Office) refers to the establishment of a culture-colony of 108 Brahman families equipped with all the necessaries of life and even with a library or collection of books (of palm-leaves) called *Sarasvati-Bhandara.* Such culture-colonies were called *ghatikas, agraharas* and *brahmapuris.* The *Mathas,* both Brahmanical, Saiva and Jaina, served as centres of higher learning where advanced scholars gathered together and received generous patronage.

In the *ranga-mantapa* of the temple, dancing was usually practised; and on special occasions dramas were also staged. The temple was also the principal feeding house of the place. All strangers, ascetics and men of learning were fed sumptuously at the temple. Such feedings were specially prominent on festive occasions.

The great temples like those at Srirangam and Chidambaram were also the places where kings and conquering heroes performed their coronation, *tulabhara* and triumphal celebrations. Rajaraja Chola the Great had his *tulabhara* performed in the Tiruvisalur temple. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251—1275 A. D.) built several *tulapurusha mantapas* in the Srirangam temple to which he gave magnificent gifts. In the Chidambaram temple Chola and Pandya rulers of the 13th century, especially, celebrated their victorious triumphs and were crowned hero-victors.

Thus the temple, in the days of Hindu independent rule, which in the Pandya country lasted down to the extinction of Nayak Raj in 1736 A. D., served as a most valuable centre of the social and cultural life of the

community. It was the meeting ground of all sections of the Hindu community. It embodied the achievement of generations of architectural and sculptural skill, the paintings and frescoes of the best workmen of every age; and its vessels, jewels and ornaments meant the accumulated results of the charity of the rulers and the nobles, which survived political changes and the fall of dynasties. It was the centre and instrument for the patronage of music and the fine arts and the place of learning both religious and scientific. It served as a centre for the encouragement of piety and learning and as an effective instrument of poor-relief; and its management was entirely in the hands of the people and their representatives.

Annamalai University,
Annamalainagar,
30—3—1937.

C. S. SRINIVASACHARI.





THE GOLDEN CAR OF THE VANAVAMALAI TEMPLE

THE

VANAVAMALAI TEMPLE & MUTT



CHAPTER I.

The name of the Shrine and its legendary history

Of the innumerable shrines that lie scattered throughout India eight are believed to be *Swayambu Kshetrams* (naturally formed kshetrams). The shrine of Totadrinath is one of them. The other *Swayambu Kshetrams* are Bhadrinath, Salagram, Naimisaranyam, Pushkaram, Tirupathi, Srirangam and Srimushnam and they are situated in different parts of our country. Every pious Hindu is expected to pay a visit of pilgrimage to these shrines.

The shrine of Totadrinath was originally known as Romasakshetram. The present site of Nanguneri with its temple, tank and streets was formerly included in the bed of a tank and the whole area was surrounded by a big mango grove. The present Pallamoli tank on the outskirts of the town of Nanguneri is identified as a portion of that tank.

A certain sage by name Romasarishi was performing penance under the shade of a tree near the site of the present Krishna's temple.

ROJA MUTHIAH,
ARTIST:
KOTTAIYUR P. O

God Vishnu gave him darshan in the same form as he is believed to do in Vaikuntam and the rishi prayed that he might be granted the boon of enjoying the same sort of darshan for ever. He was directed by God Vishnu to inspect a neighbouring rock and he obeyed the directions and came by the present idols in the sanctum of Totadrinath formed out of the face of a rock in the bed of the tank. Romasarishi constructed a temple for his find and arranged for worship.

Leaving aside the legendary part of this version we may for the present concede that a rishi of that name was responsible for the construction of this temple and as an image of that rishi is installed in the Krishna's temple near his supposed place of penance there is some justification for this belief.

The shrine is called Totadrinath due to the belief that people get themselves divested of their sins by visiting this shrine for worship. (*Tut* in Sanskrit means 'dispel'). Another legend is also current to justify this belief and it is not profitable to set it forth here as it is highly unnatural.

The shrine is called Vanavamalai evidently after the Pandya kings who held the title of Vanavan. This part of the country was called Vanavanadu. The earliest Chera kings also were called Vanavans and a Pandya queen who was a Chera

princess was called Vanavan Mahadevi. Somehow the earliest Pandya kings acquired the title of Vanavan also. So the fact that this part of the country formerly called TenPandi was ruled by the Pandya kings from very early times and the fact that the early Pandya kings have done lot of benefactions in this shrine lead to the conclusion that the place should have been named after them.

Nammalwar has described this place as Varamangalanagar. This accounts for the fact that the Utsava Goddess has been given the name of Varamangai Nachiar as there seems to have been a convention in ancient days to name the Utsava Goddess after the name of the town or village where the temple was situate. At Tirukurungudi we have Kurungudi Nachiar. It was a practice with the Pandyas to name any new settlement formed during their period as 'mangalam'. We have Maramangalam in this district and we have many other examples also. The donor of the Velvikudi grant had a surname Srivara. There is good reason to believe that he was responsible for having changed the name of this village into Varamangalanagar. This fact will be fully discussed in the next chapter. Considering the probable fact that Nammalwar visited this village after this king's time the presumption may hold ground.

CHAPTER II

The origin and growth of the temple

As has already been expressed in the previous chapter the origin of the temple is lost in legend. We may however obtain a glimpse of its hoary antiquity from the mention made of this temple in other materials of evidence.

Even here we have to tread on unsafe ground when we investigate its early history. There is an allusion in Agastya's treatise on medicine regarding this temple and the oil well in it. If this evidence can be treated as of historical value we may concede that this shrine existed two thousand five hundred years ago. Sage Agastya is associated with the Aryan imigration of South India in the 7th century B. C. He is reported to have carried the Hindu culture to Java and other countries of Indonesia where he is still worshipped. After having civilised the southern country he took his abode in the Podigai mountain near the source of the Tamraparani 6800 feet high. In the range of the ghats near Ambasamudram a particular spot is reputed as Agastya's abode. Till recently the place was supposed to be inaccessible but one Mr. Brown, an astronomer to the Maharajah of Travancore, reached this spot some years ago and set up an observatory there. In Agastya's treatise on medicine he has mentioned the distance

of this temple probably from his abode in the Podigai and it tallies with the actual distance as we observe between this temple and Agastyagudam. This fact makes it clear that Agastya mentioned only this temple and none other. Though Agastya is connected with the authorship of the first Tamil grammar and the Tamil Materia Medica there is now entertained a doubt regarding his historicity. So a piece of evidence which is otherwise very valuable is vitiated by the doubt regarding Agastya's historicity.

An elderly brahmin gentleman at Nanguneri has in his possession a cadjan record said to be a century old. It gives in its own way a general history of this temple relating to the Pandya, Chera and Nayak periods. Though many of the events mentioned therein are unreliable, there are a few details which on verification with other pieces of evidence may throw some light on the early history of this shrine.

Among many events the said record mentions that a certain Pandya king Malayadwaja by name visited this temple and made grants of dry lands to the temple and the local brahmins. There was then no irrigation source to do wet cultivation at Nanguneri. Bishop Caldwell surmises that Malayadwaja was probably the second of the Pandya kings of the Madura line. The translator

of the Mahabarata makes him the father of Chitrangada, Arjuna's wife. Goddess Minakshi of Madura is generally described in South Indian songs as the daughter of Malayadwaja Pandya. Even in the Tamil hymns the name of Malayadwaja appears often. So we may safely accord to this fact only a legendary value if we cannot at least accept that portion of the statement that a certain Pandya king of old visited this shrine and made lot of benefactions therein. The Pandya kings styled themselves lords of Podiyam ie. the southern ghats which are generally identified as the Malaya parvatham of classic fame. Probably the mention of the name Malayadwaja is a clever make up to identify an unknown Pandya ruler.

The next event detailed in the above record is a little more natural. Probably it is a historical fact a portion of which can be verified with known historical events. It narrates that the above king had three daughters Marudagavalli, Sholagavalli and Nallampillaipettaval. One of these was married to a Chola prince. She came to Madura and after having visited her parents undertook a tour of pilgrimage towards the south. She came to Nanguneri and the account says she ordered the formation of the big irrigation tank at Nanguneri and offered inducements for labourers and people of all communities to imigrate into Nanguneri and profit by the facilities offered by the tank. She is also

said to have made large grants to the temple and the brahmins. The Pandyas of the earliest line had occupied most of the Chola kingdom. Quite likely a princess of the Pandya line had married a Chola prince but it is unnatural that she should have been responsible for all these benefactions. Rather it is easy to believe the Pandya king himself was responsible for these benefactions made to an institution within his territory.

The Velvikudi grant relating to the eighth century A. D. gives a clue to the above mystery. The grantor, a Pandya king, is said to have been a powerful ruler who made conquests all round and defeated the chiefs of Podigai mountains and the Travancore kings. Due to the influence of his Vaishnavite minister a native of Kalakad near Nanguneri and the father of Nammalwar he built many Vaishnavite temples. To commemorate his victory in some place he changed the existing name of the village into Srivaramangalam and gave it as a brahmadayam to the brahmins. Judged from the fact that this king's name was Srivara and he was a patron of Vaishnavite institutions he might have been responsible for having named this village also Varamangalanagar most likely to commemorate some notable achievement of his. This king had also the surname of Chinnacholan and it is probable that he had some marriage connection or birth descent from a Chola prince as in

those early times intermarriages between these two dynasties appear to have been frequent. Latterly in the tenth century we had a Chola-Pandya dynasty itself. So the above surmise appears very natural.

Nammalwar who visited this temple and the village has described this part of the country as Vanavanadu and the village as Varamangalanagar. He has described the temple as Vanamamalai. In his time the place was very fertile and there was abundant paddy and sugarcane cultivation and water was in plenty. It was surrounded by mango groves and the houses in the village were well-built and the local brahmins were proficient in all the lores and many of them had performed yagas and yagnas also. He has made mention of Deivanayaga idol as having existed in the temple. Historians have not yet fixed the date of the Alwars. Nammalwar was the fifth of the Alwars though the greatest among them. The last of the Alwars, Tirumangai, is said to have lived by the middle of the 7th century A. D. He was a contemporary of Tirujnanasambanda who flourished during the reign of Pallava Narasimhavarman in the latter part of the 7th century A. D. This fact will take Nammalwar to a period prior to the 7th century. If Nammalwar had visited this temple after the time of his father and his royal patron we must take him to a much later period in the 8th

century A. D. Nowadays historians have begun to surmise that Nammalwar was a eighth century personage and so the above conclusion can be justified.

There is absolutely no doubt that the temple enjoyed considerable patronage at the hands of the Pandyas. Though the Pandya kings were Saivite they were not intolerant towards the Vaishnavite faith. On the contrary we see a Varaguna having constructed Vaishnavite temples and endowed benefactions to those already in existence. The early people belonging to both the faiths were not sectarian in their outlook. Even when Manavalamahamuni visited this shrine he found the adherents of both the faiths living in complete amity towards each other and even united by intermarriages. Probably this accounts for the fact that we find a good number of Saivite relics within this famous Vaishnavite shrine. Just on the western side of the sanctum we have a large number of idols representing rishis. God Vigneswara finds a prominent place among them. On the western wall of the inner prakaram we meet with a number of stone relief works representing the mythical dance of Nataraja, events connected with God Subramania and various other puranic episodes. There are representations also of social and religious dances of early days and nautch-girls and various ancient Dravidian musical instruments are exhibited. These

musical instruments are specimens of those that were in vogue in very early times and the fact that these sculptural works are highly worn out by lapse of time suggests that they should have been in existence from very remote times. Either these mixed relics are there as evidences of the cosmopolitan feeling that existed between the adherents of both the faiths in olden days or they are standing monuments of the Pandya rulers' religious tolerance. In either way they are noteworthy.

Tradition has it that this temple suffered during the reign of the Vaduga kings that followed. It is very difficult to reconcile this statement. By Vaduga kings it is generally meant Nayak rulers and this part of the country came under the Nayak rule long after. Probably the Bellala kings under whose suzerainty the Pandyas ruled this part of the country at about this time were considered as Vaduga kings as they were northerners. It is unthinkable they should have done anything which could have harmed this temple in any manner as they were all religious minded and they were also temple builders.

Just after the Bellala regime there was a short interrugnum of Muhammadan occupation of this part of the country from 1323 to 1372 A. D. Probably this part of the country was ruled by a sultan appointed by the Delhi emperor and the temple

might have had an anxious time then as Malik Kafur who introduced the Delhi emperor's sway over the Karnatic is credited with having put to death 12,000 Vaishnavites in the holy city of Srirangam alone and considerably harmed the Madura temple also. Anyhow the persecution of this shrine during any of the above two periods lacks historical confirmation.

Though the Muhammadan interrugnum lasted for 47 years they were not allowed a peaceful occupation of the country. The warlike Maravars of the southern country gave them good lot of trouble until the Madura country was rescued by the Vijianagar general Kempanna in 1372 A. D. The Pandyas thereafter ruled the country under the suzerainty of Vijianagar. But this part of the country called Nanjanad was frequently changing hands and in the fifteenth century it was included in the Travancore dominions. Naturally this village and the temple were in the Travancore territory then.

The Travancore kings occasionally resided in Shermadevi, Kalakad and Valliyoor in the 15th century. They were Vaishnavites and they have made many grants to the Vaishnavite temples at Shermadevi, Tirukurungudi, Tirukkaloor and Mannarkoil. One of them Kulasekaraperumalrajah mostly resided at Shermadevi and Valliyoor. He visited Nanguneri temple and made large grants to

the temple and the brahmins, arranged for proper worship in the temple and entrusted the management thereof to a Vaishnavite Sanyasin. This version is quoted from the cadjan record already mentioned. That it is quite historical is evident from the fact that this Kulasekaraperumalrajah's name is connected with the construction of the big mantapam in front of the sanctum. That this mantapam could not have been constructed before 1444 A. D. is certain from the fact that a Jeer's image is installed in one of the pillars thereof. At the entrance to this mantapam lifelike images of a king and his brahmin minister are installed. This mantapam should have been for a very long time the only principal structure in this temple outside the sanctum. Even now the Sahasranamam and the Sevakalam goshtis congregate in this mantapam and all the principal functions during the festivals take place here. The Unjal Utsavam is held in this mantapam every Friday. Sankabishegam, Homams and other functions take place here. So this mantapam has an importance which is not possessed by the other later but more imposing and spacious structures. Kulasekaraperumalrajah ruled from 1382 to 1444 A. D. and he must have done all the benefactions to this temple before 1444 A. D. The construction of the mantapam might have been finished in his time or it might have been begun in his time and completed later on.

The Vaishnavite Sanyasi who was entrusted with the management of the temple was one Pushpanjali sanyasi. He was residing in the small mutt which is the nucleus around which the various buildings and halls of the present Vanamamalai mutt grew later on. It is to the credit of the Vanamamalai mutt that they have not pulled down either this modest structure or any of the other low structures that had grown round it later on even when they were found quite unsuitable for the requirements of a prosperous institution. The walls round this small mutt have lot of inscriptions and if they are deciphered some historical fact may see the light. It is said that this sanyasin had a dream in which God Totadrinath directed him to hand over the temple to Manavalamahamuni and he set off to Alwartirunagari and invited Manavalamahamuni to proceed to Nanguneri and take charge of the temple as directed by Totadrinath. Leaving aside the incredible portion of the tradition regarding the vision we have in this version a glimpse of the change of hands this temple underwent and subsequent events have confirmed this quasi historical fact.

At this time some notable events were happening in the religious history of the country. An intense propaganda of dynamic Vaishnavism was being carried on by the Tamil Vaishnavite saints

and varied attempts were made to spread a knowledge of the Tamil prabandams through every nook and corner of the country. Manavalamahamuni, the celebrated saint and savant, was touring the country round gathering disciples and followers and establishing centres and institutions for Vaishnavite propaganda and spread of prabandams. In this errand he came to Nanguneri. As Manavalamahamuni's programme included the acquisition of temple management and temple repair and as Pushpanjali sanyasi had also made up his mind to hand over the temple to him the former might have secured an influential hand in the management of this temple. Subsequent events give room for presuming that he did not disturb the existing state of affairs in the temple for a time. Both Manavalamahamuni and Kulasekaraperumalrajah died in the year 1444 A. D. and so all those events should have happened before their death. A brass plate said to have been in the possession of mutt records that this temple was handed over to Ramanuja jeer, the first jeer of the Vanamamalai mutt, on the 8th of Panguni, Kollam year 622 (1447 A.D.). The Tinnevelly gazetteer and a copy of the address presented by the mutt to his Excellency during 1933 state that in 1447 A. D. the temple and the mutt were handed over to Manavalamahamuni by the Namboodri brahmins who were managing the temple and this information is certainly inaccurate. The plate itself is

now missing but the author was fortunate enough to have come across a copy of the inscription on this plate from among a heap of cadjan records in the possession of a panniar family related to the first swami.

Manavalamahamuni appointed Ramanuja Jeer, one of his principal disciples, to take charge of the temple and the mutt and he acted up to the former's directions and formally took charge of the temple management probably in 1444 A. D. but allowed the existing management to continue till 1447 A. D. when there was a definite handing over charge of both the institutions as recorded in the above said grant. In the above mentioned grant the transferor of the mutt has stated that he came by the possession of the mutt from his guru. So he could not have been the sanyasin appointed by Kulasekaraperumalrajah to manage the temple. Probably the sanyasis who were installed into office in this mutt called themselves Pushpanjali sanyasis evidently after the name of the original incumbent.

The temple was under the supervision of the Travancore rulers and consequently the people who were conducting aradanam in the temple were potis. Pushpanjali sanyasi himself was a Namboodri brahmin wearing the gobi mark. Naturally the practices and modes of worship in the temple

did not conform to the canons of prescribed sishtacharam. So the first thing that Ramanuja did was to send away the potis who were conducting worship and to appoint in their places four Vaikanasa archakas whom he had brought from Tirupathi for the purpose. Learned Vaishnavite brahmins were invited from outside and they carried on their work of spreading a knowledge of prabandams and Visishtadwaitic philosophy as chalked out by Manavalamahamuni.

Ramanuja Jeer is said to have brought the Utsava idol of Varamangainachiar from Tirupathi. Nammalwar has made mention of the existence of the Utsava idol of Deivanayaga alone in this temple. He has also mentioned about the existence of Vananayaga in this temple. This Vananayaga with the Ubayanachiars is now given an unimportant position in the temple. The expression Varamangai used by Nammalwar in his mangalasasanam is given different interpretations by different people. Some say it refers to Varamangainachiar and others say it refers only to the name of the town. One commentary on this mangalasasanam confirms the latter view. In the grant relating to the year 1447 A.D. the town is described as Varamangai and this part of the country as Vananadu. The records relating to the periods prior to the Nawab's rule describe this town as Srivaramangai and this part of the

country as Vananadu. So we may safely decide that the expression Srivaramangai mentioned in Nammalwar's mangalasasanam represents only this town and this theory naturally leads to the conclusion that the Utsava goddess of Srivaramangai was installed for the first time only during the time of Ramanuja Jeer. Further there are a lot of festivals in this temple when Deivanayaga is treated as the bridegroom and Srivaramangainachiar as the bride of the mutt. On the Kanuvu day Srivaramangainachiar stays in the mutt and celebrates the Kanuvu festivities. Deivanayaga is invited into the mutt and the celebration takes the form of a function connected with the honouring of a marriage couple This occasion is noteworthy as on that day both the idols are decked with very valuable and grand-looking Makara Kantis which are the most remarkable among the jewels in this institution. On the 9th day of the Chithrai festival all sorts of provisions are exhibited in the mantapam in front of the mutt and on that day the mutt distributes pansupari to people of all communities in celebration of this event. These provisions are intended as dowry presented by the mutt to the Nachiar. The above facts clearly evidence that the goddess of Srivaramangai was installed in the temple by the Jeer.

No doubt the Muhammadan occupation of the country lasted till 1372 A. D. and during this

period the Vaishnavite settlement of Srirangam suffered terribly and the idol of that temple itself had to be taken to Tirupathi. Idols from other temples were also taken to Tirupathi for safe custody during the perilous period. Madura itself suffered badly. Naturally a suggestion arises that this idol of Srivaramangai might have been originally removed to Tirupathi for safe custody and brought back during Ramanuja Jeer's time, but it is impossible to reconcile this idea with the fact that the Utsava idol of Deivanayaga remained in safety in this temple itself all the time.

From Francis Xavier's accounts we learn that by the middle of the 16th century this part of the country was in the hands of the Vijianagar kings. A general Nagama Nayak was sent by the Vijianagar ruler to help a Pandya king against a Chola usurper. Nagama accomplished his mission and he was made the ruler of the Pandya country in 1516 A. D. From that time forward the Nayaks were rulers of this part of the country.

An inscription on a copper plate dated 27th Margali, Kollam year 720 (1545 A. D.) records the grant by a Nayak ruler of Sydunganallur, called Vittala Raya, of 32 mahs of land to this temple and 6 mahs of land to the Jeer. This king appears to have been a general appointed by the Vijianagar ruler Sadhasiva as the Viceroy of Thiruvadidesam, Travancore country.

The next royal patron who has done benefactions to this temple is Virappa Nayak who ruled at Madura from 1572 to 1595 A. D. He was a great temple builder and he constructed the walls of Chidambaram temple, the gopuram, the thousand-pillared Mantapam and the Virappa Nayaka Mantapam at Madura. He constructed the Virappa Nayaka Mantapam in this temple and it is a masterpiece of the Nayak style of architecture.

The next Nayak ruler who has immortalised his name by making many munificent grants to this temple is Viswanada Vijiaranga ChockanadhaNayak who ruled at Trichinopoly. His attention was mainly devoted to religious practices and gifts to temples. He has made lavish grants to the temple at Alwarthirunagari, Srivaikuntam and Tinnevelly. He has made a grant of considerable property to this temple also. It is recorded on a copper plate in the possession of the mutt and is dated Salivahana Sakha year 1857 (1646 A. D.). It records the gift to this temple of all the lands bounded on the north by Myladaparai, on the east by the Kallamoli hills, on the south by the Tortoise hills and on the west by the Vajjravalli hills besides the topes at Kalakad, Sengalakurichi, Sirumalanji, Perumalanji, Attangarai and other villages. The Jeer has also been given a big grant for the feeding of brahmins in the mutt. This is the biggest grant ever made to this temple and the temple now

retains the Sengalakurichi tope alone. The fact that the temple possessed these lands once is further evidenced by the practice at present of reading the purport of the above grant from a record before the God where the latter proceeds on the Kudiraivahanam (Golden horse) on the 8th day of the Margali festival. The implication is that the God goes round on horseback inspecting those lands.

A copper plate inscription dated 16th Arpasi, Kollam 794 (1619 A. D.) records the grant by 12 brahmin Panniars of Nanguneri and the several non-brahmin ryots of Nanguneri of a large extent of lands in favour of the Jeer as the trustee of the Vanamamalai temple for the latter's having paid to government the assessment in respect of these lands as the owners could not pay them and so defaulted.

Later on we find the Travancore kings in possession of this part of the country again.

Somewhere by 1734 A. D. a party of Muhammadan soldiers headed by Chanda Sahib and Bada Sahib entered the Travancore country through the Aramboly pass. They took Kottar, Sucheendrum and Nagercoil. They burnt the big car at the Sucheendrum temple and committed many of the attrocities which we may at this distance of time observe in that temple. Nanguneri

temple does not appear to have suffered at their hands in any way though a good amount of scare had been created by them Quite likely they proceeded to Nagercoil by a different route. They were however easily won over by presents by Dalawah Rama Iyen and they returned without doing further acts of molestation.

Due to internal troubles the Travancore ruler was not able to safe-guard his possessions on the Valliyoor - Kalakad side. The Carnatic Nawab's viceroy at Trichinopoly took hold of this opportunity to annex this part of the country to the Madura province of the Nawab. In 1752 this viceroy Moodumiah by name came to Tinnevelly and concluded a treaty with Dalawah Rama Iyen whereby the Travancore king again obtained possession of the country between Kalakad and the Cape by having purchased it for a large amount.

Meanwhile Moodumiah had rebelled and the Carnatic Nawab sent General Mophuz Khan to replace him. He and his English allies reached Tinnevelly in 1755 A. D. The Travancore commandant at Kalakad abandoned the place and withdrew with his garrison to Thovalai. Mophuz Khan took charge of the fort and left for Tinnevelly. Meanwhile the Travancore ruler, the rebel Moodumiah and Poligar Puli Thevar joined together and

they attacked the Kalakad fort and captured it but withdrew immediately. Later however the Travancore ruler and Puli Thevar again attacked Kalakad, defeated Mophuz Khan and captured the whole garrison as prisoners. The Travancore king was now the ruler of the whole country from Periar in the north to Kalakad in the south and he concluded an alliance with the Carnatic Nawab agreeing to pay a nominal subsidy and thus retaining this part of the country.

Meanwhile Mophuz Khan also rebelled against the Nawab, attacked Kalakad and drove and pursued the Travancore forces right to the Aramboly lines but he was here defeated by the Travancore General Champakaraman Pillai. Kalakad however still remained in the hands of Mophuz Khan. The Carnatic Nawab sent Yusuf Khan to displace Mophuz Khan as Governor of Trichinopoly province. Yusuf Khan applied to the Travancore king for assistance against Mophuz Khan. The Travancore king sent General Champakaraman Pillai with 5000 men and another contingent of 10000 men from Quilon. The combined forces defeated Mophuz Khan and his friend, the Poligar of Wadagarai. The Carnatic Nawab returned to the Travancore ruler all his eastern possessions including Kalakad.

Later Yusuf Khan also rebelled and asked for assistance from the Travancore king having

promised to cede a good portion of the country including Palamcottah. He did not however get the help he asked for and was captured and hanged in 1762 A. D.

Yusuf Khan's successor thought it desirable to take possession of all the country lying on the eastern side of the ghats and Kalakad came under the Nawab's rule. The Travancore ruler sent an envoy, Manik Lala, to Madras and represented to the Nawab the injustice done to him by the Nawab's officers in having annexed Kalakad. The Nawab did not heed the representations. The British Governor of Madras who was approached did not also move promptly in the matter. Meanwhile the Nawab pressed the Travancore ruler for the remittance of the mesne revenues of the previous years. At the intervention of the British a treaty was concluded in 1765 A. D. between the Nawab and the Travancore ruler whereby Kalakad was finally lost to Travancore.

The Tinnevelly District and naturally Kalakad included in it were ceded to the British in 1801 A. D. and Kalakad thereafter became a British possession and Nanguneri thus came directly under the British.

The above long account was introduced to show the disturbed state of this part of the country during these periods. In the subsequent chapters

the reader will come across events which will have some bearing on the various facts described above.

We must confess that after the Nayak rule we find a big gap in the chain of evidence forming a connected account of the fortunes of this temple. In this state of things one landmark emerges as a load-star in a cloudy firmament. After Muhammad Ali's death his son Umdat-Ul-Umrah ruled over the Carnatic from 1795 to 1801 A. D. There was then a sort of dual Government. The revenue administration was in the hands of the Nawab. This Nawab has on the 2nd of Ramzan Hijri 1211 (1797 A. D.) granted a sarvamaniam of lands at Nanguneri and various other places to the Vanamamalai jeer. This fact will be more fully dealt with in the chapter on the mutt, but it is a good piece of evidence to show that the temple was not harmed in any way during the Carnatic Nawab's sway.

After 1801 this part of the country came under the direct control of the British. Originally the temples and charitable endowments were under the supervision of the Government, but in 1841 the management of the temple was handed over to the jeer with a tasdik allowance of about Rs. 6000.

Between the Nayak period and the British occupation some benefactions must have been

made to this temple by various princes, Poligars and others. It is quite impossible to obtain any historic clue regarding all of them. In the chapter on the various structures in the temple some of those probabilities will be found noticed.

The latter-day jeers have done lot of benefactions to the temple. The main gopuram, the big walls of defence round the temple and some of the principal mantapams, not to speak of the very valuable vehicles and jewels, owe their existence to their enterprise. The latter-day history of the temple is a history of the benefactions of the jeers and they will be fully detailed in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER III.

The architecture in the temple

When we attempt to arrive at the probable period of construction of this temple as disclosed by an inspection of the style of architecture employed therein we are on safer ground as we can utilise the conclusions arrived at by well known authorities on the subject of Hindu architecture.

During the Buddhistic period ie. before the Christian era temples were all excavated in rocks and mountains. The various viharas and chittis relating to the period were all cave structures. The

Dravidian or South Indian style of architecture is said to have evolved from the Buddhistic style of excavation and so the earliest specimens of Dravidian architecture were all excavated and not built.

In South India temples were originally built of wood and plastered. This kind of construction was found to be perishable in course of time. Even now the temples of Travancore are built of wood, tiles and granite. Gradually the Hindus of the south adapted the plan of the Buddhists in the construction of their temples and temples cut out of the faces of the rocks came into vogue for the first time by the third century or thereabouts. By the 6th or 7th century the Pallavas built separate structures though rocks were used for the purpose. We have notable examples of this sort of architecture at Mahabalipuram. By the 7th century we had also structural temples built purely of granite stone and mortar. Thereafter temples in Southern India were built within the towns or their outskirts and plains and elaborately finished with granite stones and mortar. In many cases the latter-day structures have grown to such gorgeous proportions that the sanctum could scarcely be located easily. The simple edifice to identify the sanctum has in many cases been hidden by grand mantapams and gopurams which have grown without considerations of symmetry or useful

purpose. At Tiruchendur we have a tower on one side of the temple and that entrance is not used at any time. At Srirangam the big gopurams and the thousand-pillared mantapam have no ostensible connection with the temple. Similarly we have in the Nanguneri temple the gradual evolution of the various styles of architecture from the earliest Hindu period right down to the Nayak period.

The sanctum of this temple is on a rock and cut out of the face thereof. The moolastanam ie. Totadrinath and his co-deities are all cut of the rock itself. One single stone embosoms the Gods, the sanctum and the platform space right up to the Sannidhi Garudan. Of course the ceiling of the sanctum is constructed of granite stones coped over the rock on one side and supported by walls on the other three sides. The front mantapam is a pucca granite structure. So, we have in this temple the partially rock cut and partially structural construction believed to have been the prevalent style of construction in the third century A. D.

The latter-day benefactors, the Travancore kings and more especially the Nayaks have recorded their munificence in this temple by having constructed imposing structures belonging to the style of architecture current during their times. These will be described later on. But for a clue regarding

the antiquity of this temple we have to depend on the mode of architecture employed in the sanctum and the mantapam just in front of it. From the conclusions arrived at by authorities whose views on architecture are generally accepted as valuable we may for the present concede that the temple of Totadrinath was constructed somewhere about the 3rd century A. D.

There are lot of inscriptions on the walls of the inner Sannidhi and round the Vimanam. They are intact though made considerably invisible by the usual coating of chunam and the more inevitable oil-smear but a portion on the front wall has been copied by the late Mr. Gopinath Rao and that portion of the wall cleaned by him for the purpose is still retained free of chunam or oil. The authorities of this temple exhibit an abiding interest in maintaining these inscriptions and they render the needed help to any scholar who desires to copy these inscriptions. The script employed is very old and these inscriptions if copied and deciphored will throw some light on the early history of this temple and particularly on the date of its construction.

CHAPTER IV.

The Origin and growth of the Vanamamalai mutt

Before getting into a descriptive account of the Vanamamalai mutt and its early history it is desirable that mention should be made of the circumstances which occasioned the springing up of the various mutts in our country.

When Hinduism was in the height of its glory and strength Buddhism rose up in the country ostensibly as a counterblast against the priest-ridden exclusiveness and sacrificial excrescences of Hinduism which brought into ugly prominence the Brahmin's priestly monopoly of worldly benefits at the expense of the common people. Buddhism went to the other extreme in its zeal for radical reform and completely neglected the idea of the importance of God in its preachings. No doubt, as is the case with all radical reformations of existing beliefs, Buddhism, a purely reformist creed, found lot of supporters and if only its votaries had not neglected the idea of God in their preachings their fine ethical principles would have appealed to the general populace more effectively and Buddhism would have stayed on permanently in our country and contributed to the homogeneity of the Indian nation. The religious yearning of a people accustomed to emotional worship of God could not accommodate itself to a quasiatheism

like Buddhism which even in its prosperous days had to depend on the patronage of kings for its existence.

When latterly the Mimamsakas began making a flank attack on Buddhism Sankaracharya took hold of the opportunity to beard the lion in its own cage and he combined Buddhistic ethics and Mimamsic dissertation for his preachings.

To carry on an effective propaganda Sankaracharya wanted centres and institutions where he could congregate his disciples and depute them for preaching his philosophy. The Buddhists were able to broadcast their doctrines through the agency of monasteries and Sankaracharya followed that example with this difference that profiting by the latter-day failings of decaying Buddhism he put a ban on women being enlisted as disciples. The mutts started by Sankaracharya were the precursors of those that were started by succeeding religious teachers in our country.

The Buddhists in the beginning and the Jains later on were carrying on their propaganda through the medium of the vernaculars and they were easily able to reach the hearts of the masses. The Saivite Nayanmars and the Vaishnavite Alwars took the cue and started their propaganda in the vernacular and as their preachings were based on an insistance

on Bakti or devotion as the bed-rock of their creeds they were also able to reach the hearts of the common people and secure disciples in thousands and this necessitated their founding centres everywhere to carry on their religious preachings.

It was not very easy to construct mutts in the beginning. So these preachers got hold of temple management in the beginning so that they might have ready-made centres to start their propaganda with. This is the reason why we find most of the prominent temples of Southern India under the control of the mutts. Later on mutts were constructed independently and temple management however was retained by them. Saint Nadamuni introduced the system of reciting prabandams in the Srirangam temple. Manavalamahamuni definitely worked up to obtain temple-management and temple-repairing work as that gave him a double advantage. He could have possession of ready-made institutions and prabandams recited and dissertations conducted within a temple could have an air of divine dignity attached to them.

The above enterprise on the part of Manavalamahamuni soon brought temples under the management of himself and his followers and disciples. This explains the fact that the Brahmins of the Thengalai sect have a predominating hand in all the southern temples.

Now turning to the Vanamamalai mutt, we must here narrate briefly the state of things at Nanguneri when Manavalamahamuni came over here on the invitation of Pushpanjali sanyasi. As already described in a previous chapter, Nanguneri was a small but flourishing settlement with a small but important temple visited by Nammalwar and various kings. The early inhabitants of the place were the Sholiyars who were smarthas wearing the Vaishnavite caste mark and the Sevaiyars a set of Vaishnavite brahmins who had styled themselves Seydavelviars i.e. people learned in the Vedic lore. The number of occupied houses was very small and the people were evidently rich and influential as could be inferred from subsequent events. Most of the lands should have been held by the temple and the brahmins. There was intermarriage between the Vaishnavite and the Saivite brahmins and they were living on terms of cordiality. Pushpanjali sanyasi himself was a Vaishnavite wearing gobi mark and the people that were performing Aradanam in the temple were Pothis. Naturally the acharas in the temple should have been far from being Vaishnavite in nature as we understand at this distance of time.

It was at this juncture that Manavalamahamuni came by the possession of this temple. Tradition and also the cadjan records in the possession of a number of people at Nanguneri give the same

sort of account regarding the transfer of the management of the temple and the mutt to Manavalamahamuni.

It may not be out of place to notice a few facts relating to Manavalamahamuni. He was born near Alwar-Tirunagari about 1370 A. D. and lived for about 74 years and it is believed he died in 1444 A. D. He was a pupil under Tiruvoymozhipillai, a Sholiya Vaishnavite brahmin of Alwar-Tirunagari, well versed in Tamil prabandams. After finishing his course of instruction under Tiruvoymozhipillai he went to Srirangam where his piety and scholarship attracted public attention and he gathered round himself a number of disciples and followers. He was not only intent on spreading a knowledge of the prabandams among people who resorted to his presence as has already been noticed in a previous chapter but he worked up to acquire institutions and temples where he could gather teachers and pupils and do effective and extensive propaganda. With this view he also took over the control of rituals and repairs in many temples. He secured a very large number of disciples in course of time, but eight of them known as Ashtadiggajas were the chief among them. Each of them was deputed by Manavalamahamuni to take charge of some particular item of propaganda work. Ramanuja Jeer the first jeer of the Vanamamalai mutt was the principal among them.

It is said that when Manavalamahamuni toured south from Srirangam he came to Alwar Tirunagari and there the ruler of that part of the country took him as his guru and the master named the royal disciple as Satagopadasa. Who this Satagopadasa was is not known, but it shows that Manavalamahamuni had the support of princes too in his propaganda work.

As already mentioned, the brass plate said to have been once in the possession of the mutt records the fact of the temple and the mutt having been handed over to Ramanuja Jeer in the Kollam year 622 corresponding to 1447 A. D. The grant reads as: "Deed of gift executed by Pushpanjali yati in favour of Ramanuja yati on the 8th of Panguni Kollam Andu 622 Amarapaksha Dwiteeyai Saturday. Whereas we have this day handed over by means of this gift pattayam the Vanamamalai Perumal temple situate in the town of Srivaramangai in the Vanavanad country and the masonry mutt given us by our guru Pushpanjali sanyasi the said Ramanuja yati is entitled to enjoy as long as the sun and the moon last the swamiyams we were enjoying in the Vanamamalai temple." Probably the temple was handed over to Manavalamahamuni in the year 1444 A. D. itself by Kulasekaraperumal raja who also died in 1444 A. D. Manavalamahamuni might have taken possession of the temple even in 1444 A. D. from Pushpanjali sanyasi and

the grant of the temple and the mutt might have been confirmed during 1447 A. D. Whether Ramanuja Jeer, the first of the jeers of the Vanamamalai mutt, assumed charge of the temple and the mutt during 1444 A. D. or 1447 A. D. it is certain from the above grant that he was in possession of both the institutions during 1447 A. D.

The mutt has published a Guruparampara. It gives the thithi and the name of the year of accession and the thithi and the name of the year of demise of each jeer. We have the starting date of 1447 A. D. the date of accession of Ramanuja Jeer as evidenced by the above said grant and we can compute the dates of accession or demise of the other jeers basing our calculations on this known date. We have also certain recorded pieces of evidence relating to particular events connected with some jeer or another. When we verify these evidences with the calculated evidence we are landed in an impossible position as the dates calculated from the Guruparampara happen to be inaccurate in many cases. These inaccuracies will be pointed out then and there and the future research worker will have the easier work of finding out sources of reconciliation and adjustment if possible. Where the discrepancy is too damaging the Guruparampara information is given up and the recorded evidence given weight to. Anyhow some fuller research is necessary in respect of this subject. We may now get

into a detailed account relating to the various jeers as is available from a scrutiny of the available pieces of evidence.

Ramanuja Jeer (1) 1447—1483 A. D. (Kollam year 622—658). He was a disciple of Manavalamahamuni. His original name was Alagiavaradan. He was the second son of one Srirangaraja a Seidavelviyar brahmin of Nanguneri. Alagiavaradan did not get himself married and he was a highly religious minded and learned scholar of very austere habits. As Manavalamahamuni thought that he was the most suitable person to be placed in charge of these institutions he gave him sanyasam and initiated him into the secrets of an ascetic life and gave him Mantropadesam. He was installed as the first jeer of the Vanamamalai mutt and the temple was also placed under his management.

The new jeer's piety and austerity from his youth reached the ears of the Travancore king who thereupon paid a visit to the temple and confirmed the grant of the lands already in the possession of the temple and the mutt.

The jeer then started on a tour to the northern country and secured many disciples for the mutt. He visited Tirupathi and brought the idol of Srivaramangai from there. He came to Srirangam where he received temple honours. Here Manavala is said to have handed to him the Arangana-

garappan idol now in the mutt. This is not probable as Manavala died before Ramanuja took charge of the mutt as the first jeer. Probably the idol was handed over to him before 1444 A. D., but there are cadjan records evidencing the former statement. The jeer passed Alagar koil (Tirumalirunjolai) Madura and Srivilliputhoor and then reached Nanguneri. Along with the idol of Srivaramangai he also took with him from Tirupathi four Vaikanasa archakas having engaged them on payment of a lump sum of 800 Gold coins and on having promised them attractive emoluments in the temple. The present archakas in the Nanguneri temple are the descendants of the people thus brought down from Tirupathi. The two pothis who were performing aradanam named Tikkanambi and Ramanambi were sent away and these four archakas were appointed in their places.

He constructed the Manivasal mantapam within the temple, the Terku Nachiar and Vadakku Nachiar sannidhis and the Alwar temple. He is also said to have built the second prakaram and the smaller gopuram. It is improbable he could have constructed the outer walls of the second prakaram and the reasons will be apparent from a subsequent chapter. He celebrated the Tirukalyanam for Deivanayaga and consecrated the Ubaya Nachiars, made the gold Satagopam and

rebuilt the mutt and consecrated the Aranganagarappan sannidhi in the mutt. He also made lot of jewels for the temple. Of course all these benefactions appear to have been done by a royal patron whose image is placed in every new structure connected with this jeer. Probably the jeer influenced this royal patron to do all these.

Some people who claim to be the descendants of this jeer's family reside at Nanguneri. They style themselves as ayyangars. It appears they had till recently smartha connections. The street which contained the jeer's house is called Tirumaligai street. The jeer's present relatives enjoy the privilege of the first Tirtham in the temple.

Birthday Purattasi Punarvasu. Tirtham Adi Sukla Trayodasi.

Kalamoor Varadamuniswami (2) 1483-1502 (Kollam year 658 to 677). He was a native of Tirunarayanapuram in the Mysore state.

He repaired the vimanam of the temple and consecrated it. He constructed the mantapam over the Dwarapalakas near the outer entrance to the sanctum and a mantapam between the Paramapada gate and the Terku Nachiar sannidhi.

In his time his sons and relatives came to Nanguneri and insisted on staying with the jeer in the mutt itself. A trouble arose between them and

the stalattars and the swami left with his relatives to Tirunarayanapuram having, with the consent of the stalattars, installed one Chendalangaraswami as jeer and he died thereafter at Tirunarayanapuram where his Brindavanam exists. In the group of Tiruvarasus (Brindavanams) at Nanguneri a vertical stone slab is posted with the inscription stating that this swami's Brindavanam exists at Tirunarayanapuram.

Birthday Chitrai Tiruvadirai Tirtham Adi Krishna Pratamai.

Chendalangaraswami (3) 1502 - 1520 A. D. (Kollam 677 - 695). He was a Karuvelangulam Sholiya. He secured lands for the temple at Papakudi and obtained a sarvamaniam right for it from the Government and he endowed his own private property at Shermadevi and other places in favour of the mutt and obtained a sarvamaniam right from the Government for these lands also. He made jewels for the Perumal and the Nachiar, constructed the Dasavatara sannidhi in the temple and the Ugranam, Tiruppalliyarai and the kitchen in the mutt.

None of his relatives came to Nanguneri during his time.

Birthday Purattasi Pooradam Tirtham Masi Krishna Navami.

Anattalagumkonda Rangappaswami (4) 1520-1526 A. D. (Kollam 695-701). He was a Brihajaranam and belonged to the family of Perianambi Aiyengar and he came from Srirangam.

He built the big walls of defence round the temple, the big gopuram, the stone wall of protection for the tank and the Kanuvu-mantapam. He also built the first curtain-mantapam in the mutt. An image of his is sculptured in the big gopuram on the front side.

His relatives did not come to Nanguneri. Birthday Panguni Mrigaseerusham Tirtham Ani Sukla Chathurtasi.

Timmayyangarswami (5) 1526 — 1544 A. D. (Kollam 701—719). He was a Kondagai Sholiya belonging to the family of Tiruvoymozhipillai and was a native of Tiruvottiyoor in the Maravarnadu (Ramnad Dt.)

He constructed the Aranganagarappan sannidhi, the Alagiavaradan mantapam, the Ramanuja mantapam and the granary in the mutt. He also constructed the mutts at Tirunarayanapuram and Alwartirunagari and he made vessels for the Alwartirunagari temple. His relatives did not come to Nanguneri.

Birthday Margali Uttaram, Tirtham Thai Sukra Tritheeai.

Emberumanarswami (6) 1544—1599 (Kollam 719 to 774). He was a member of the Vinjimoor family. He finished the construction of the Ramanuja mantapam begun in the time of his predecessor and he built the Elephant mantapam in front of the mutt and the bath-room. He also constructed the stone rivetment round the big tank. To defray the cost of the rivetment he sold the gold Satagopam, some houses and shops and the silver plate covering the Garudavahanam.

If the Guruparamparai were to be taken as a reliable record the period of jeership of this swamy falls within the reign of Virappa Nayak and the Virappa Nayakan mantapam in this temple should have been built in his time. If so, it will be inexplainable that he should have had to strain his resources to construct a utility work when a royal patron had spent an enormous amount on this very grand edifice. Further in this swami's period calculated from the Guruparampara two notable events have occurred. Rajadiraja Vittaladevaraya of Seydunganalloor gave a large grant of lands to the temple and the mutt on Margali 27th Kollam 720 (1545 A. D.). This Vittalaraya was a general of Vijianagar, appointed as the Viceroy of the Travancore country. A fuller research about this Vittalaraya's reign may throw more light upon these doubtful events. At this same period another big grant was made in favour of the mutt. A number of pannaiyars of Nanguneri

conveyed their lands to the jeer as the trustee of the Vanamamalai temple. This grant is dated 16th Arpasi, Kollam 794 (1619 A. D.) and should have secured for the temple a vast extent of landed property. The occasion for the grant is stated to have been the fact of these twelve brahmin pannaiyars and the other non-brahmin ryots of not having been able to pay the Government dues in respect of these lands. The jeer is said to have paid the dues and in consideration thereof he obtained a grant of all these lands. Anyhow the difficulty of relying on the dates calculated from the Guruparampara increases whenever we obtain tangible recorded evidence to verify the correctness of the dates calculated.

This jeer's relatives did not come to Nanguneri.

Birthday Kartigai Pooram Tirtham Adi Krishna Panchami.

Peria Tiruvenkataswami (7) 1599 - 1607 (Kollam 774 - 782). He was a native of the northern districts ie. Chola-desa.

He built the Venugopalasannidhi in the temple. His relatives did not come to Nanguneri.

Birthday Avani Barani Tirtham Thai Sukla Navami.

Konappaswami (8) 1607 - 1617 (Kollam 782 - 792). He was a member of the Vittalapuram family of Ashtagothram.

He built a granary and a cattle shed in the temple.

During this swami's period there was an agent Tirupathi Dodda Viraraghava Aiyengar who was giving considerable trouble to the public by preventing the swami from undertaking any construction or addition in the temple or the mutt.

This swami's demise took place under very regrettable circumstances. A dispute arose between a marava and a temple servant in a land belonging to the mutt. It culminated in the temple servant having seriously assaulted the marava who died in consequence. The news of this incident enraged the maravas of the place and they assumed a vengeful attitude. They wrongly believed that the bold action of a petty servant could have had the backing of the head of the mutt. The swami on his own part was very cautious and he was keeping himself within the mutt premises and avoiding going to the temple for worship. He set up an idol of Totadrinath within the mutt and was worshipping it. Meanwhile the Panguni festival intervened and he led the Adhyapakam goshti, thinking that time would have cooled down the rage of the maravars. The maravars got intelligence of the presence of the swami in the street and a party of them came down and wreaked their vengeance on the swami. The other people and the vehicle

bearers took to heels. But the maravars assured them that their purpose was not to plunder or harm other innocent people. This rather damaging incident is recorded in the cadjan records as "The eighth swami met kashtam (danger) in the paradesi street". The truth of this incident is proved by the stoppage of all music and drum when the God's procession reaches the western end of the paradesi street where the alleged incident is said to have taken place and the silent and solemn procession from that spot to the temple gate. The occupants of the houses near the alleged occurrence also observe some ceremonials during the time of the year when this particular thithi comes on.

Birthday Avani Chithrai Tirtham Panguni Sukla Ekadasi.

Venkataswami (8-a) 1617 - 1621 (Kollam 792-796). He was a native of Srivilliputhoor and belonged to the Vinjimoor family. He was a jeer for 4 years.

During his time his sons Alwar Aiyangar and Vanamamalai Aiyangar came to Nanguneri and stayed with the swami. There was a dispute with the stalattars in consequence and the swami went away to Srivilliputhoor.

Alankara Jeer (8-b) 1621 - 1624 (Kollam 797 - 799).

He was a native of Nadankoil. During his time his relatives came to Nanguneri and were worrying the swami for money and other things. So there was again trouble with the stalattars and he also went away. None of his relatives are at Nanguneri.

Swamis (8-a) and (8-b) are omitted mention of in the Guruparampara. The information regarding them is taken from reliable old cadjan records.

Chinna Rangappaswami (9) 1624 - 1637 (Kollam 799 - 812). He came from the northern districts.

He constructed the Alwar sannidhi and the mantapam in front of it. He repaired the terrace of the temple as it was leaky.

When this jeer assumed charge of the mutt he found its prestige was considerably low. On the one hand two of the previous jeers had to leave the mutt under unpleasant circumstances and on the other hand the maravars were in an exultant attitude on account of their having with impunity harmed the head of the mutt and got on unpunished. The swami took this unenviable situation seriously to heart and started off to meet the Nayak ruler and represent his grievances to him and induce him to enforce order among the maravars. The Nayak ruler, evidently Tirumala Nayak (1623-1659 A. D.) if the date of accession of this swami as worked

from the Guruparampara be correct, sent a force to subdue the maravars and that force accomplished its purpose. Thereafter the maravars did not trouble the mutt any more.

The above version is taken from the traditional accounts. It is however very difficult to reconcile it with the fact that the maravars have performed lot of benefactions in the temple and a number of mantapams, sannidhis and festivals owe their existence to their philanthropy. Such philanthropists are not likely to have been habitual adversaries to the temple or mutt. Further the maravars of Nanguneri could not have been so powerless as to have been subdued by a small force of Nayaks. On the contrary we see that they had been powerful mercenaries selling their adherence to this ruler or that according to the extent of benefit derived there and then and they had offered asylum to many a vanquished or recalcitrant ruler or poligar. After the East India Company assumed the Government of this part of the country, the first thing that was done was to have convicted and transported the eight kavalgars of Nanguneri. Such are not the people to have been cowed down so easily. At any rate the traditional account is there and we have no tangible evidence to disprove its truth.

At the outskirts of the town of Nanguneri and on the western side of it there is a Krishna temple.

It is said that the descendant of a person connected with the murder of the 8th swami was being visited by a number of calamities. He consulted an astrologer in Travancore and the latter gave out his opinion that all his troubles were due to the visitations of the sin of the Sanyasi murder committed by his ancestor and they could be warded off by the construction of a Krishna temple. Whether the fact of consultation with an astrologer was true or not the fact is there that this sannidhi was constructed by a marava and an image of his is on the gateway of the sannidhi and the sannidhi itself is called the Maravar Krishnan sannidhi. This marava's image is also found in one of the pillars lying on the road-side. It appears that there was a mantapam within the temple square and God Deivanayaga used to rest there for some time during the festivals. The mantapam later on got dilapidated and it was not rebuilt and its pillars are lying scattered on the road-side. This accounts for the fact that the same marava's image is found on the gateway of the temple and the pillar above mentioned.

Tirumala Nayak's forces attacked Nanjanad in the year 1636. So we can safely believe that the then jeer, whoever he was, influenced the invading leader or the Nayak ruler himself to check the maravars.

Birthday Arpasi Anusham, Tirtam Ani Sukla Dasami.

Nadu Tiruvenkataswami (10) 1637—1700 (Kollam 812—875).

He built the kitchen and the store-room in the temple.

During this swami's time the people of Nanjanad protested against the levy of taxes by the Travancore ruler while their lands were devastated by the Nayaks.

Birthday Kartigai Trithecai, Tirtham Adi Krishna amavasya.

Peria Deivanayagaswami (11) 1700—1732 (Kollam 875—907).

He built the Ottakarai mantapam in the mutt and a mantapam in front of the Paramapada gate in the temple and also the Swami tope and another mantapam.

In this swami's time Viswanatha Vijiaranga Chockanatha Nayak endowed the mutt with a big grant. The copper plate containing this grant is at present in the possession of the mutt. The grant is dated Salivahana year 1646 Krodi Palguna Suddha (1724 A. D.).

Thirty families of outsiders including his sons and relatives accompanied the swami and stayed on at Nanguneri. There was trouble between them

and the stalattars but by sheer numbers the former stifled the protests of the stalattars and grew powerful. In this swami's time the system of feeding the residents of opposite streets by turns came into existence and it has since become a hereditary privelege for the Thengalai Vaishnavite brahmins of Nanguneri. The town is divided into two blocks for the purpose of feeding. The people of the streets on the eastern side are fed on one day and those of the streets on the western side the next day and so on. Only one male member is eligible for this feeding in each house. A knowledge of the prabandams is also insisted on to qualify one for a place in the first and the second curtain feedings.

During the years 1702 and 1721 the people of Nanjanad protested again against the levy of taxes by the Travancore ruler when their hands had been devastated by the Nayaks.

Birthday Arpasi Tiruvadarai Tirtham Chitrai Krishna Shashti.

Chinna Tiruvenkataswami (12) 1732 - 1757 (Kollam 907 - 932).

He was the son of Munimatam Viraraghava Aiyengar of Alwar-Tirunagari belonging to the Nadumandalam Viluppanoor family. He is said to have come from Srirangam though a native of Alwar-Tirunagari.

He built a Kottagai (shed) on the eastern side of the Paramapada gate and it does not exist now. He also built the second and the third curtain mantapams in the mutt.

He made the big car at Alwar-Tirunagari and the golden palanquin, the small golden palanquin, the Tolikina and the golden Koradu for the Alwar-Tirunagari temple.

He built the Vimanams for the three Nambi sannidhis at Tirukurungudi and made vessels and jewels for the Tirukurungudi Temple.

In this swami's time twenty families of relatives accompanied him and they co-operated with the thirty families that accompanied the previous swami. There was of course trouble with the stalattars and numbers prevailed and the immigrants became more powerful and the influence of the stalattars gradually waned.

In this swami's time there was a case of misappropriation of mutt amounts by one Appu Aiyengar during kollam 916. A report was made to the khiledar of Kalakad. One Sikhander Khan was sent for inquiry and he was purchased by Appu Aiyengar and nothing was done. Another appeal was made to Viceroy Moodumiah and he sent another officer Vaikuntanada Aiyer for inquiry. The latter died in the mutt suddenly and the swami

12563

himself had to proceed to Tinnevelly for celebrating the birthday of the previous swami as the thithi intervened just then.

Another incident is also recorded as having happened during this swami's time. The swami's son-in-law, one Alagappa Aiyengar, who was managing the mutt, misappropriated the mutt amounts and there was trouble. The guilt was ultimately fixed upon him and he was sent away and he went away to Alwar-Tirunagari. Meanwhile the swami died suddenly. His successor who was already the junior in the previous regime took up the matter and moved the Government. The Sircar police proceeded to Alwar-Tirunagari and grappled with the accused who agreed to hand over the stolen property if he would be allowed to get into the Emberumanar mutt where he alleged he had secreted the property. The police acted up to the request and Alagappa Aiyengar went in but when he came out he was dressed in Kashayam and held a Danda in his hand and the police could do nothing.

Birthday Adi Mrigaseerusham Tirtham Chitrai Krishna Panchami.

Chinna Deivanayagaswami (13) 1757 - 1761 (Kollam 932 Arpasi 936).

He was a member of the Pillaiyarkulam family.

He made the Tirumarbu Nachiar for the Vanamamalaiperumal and Peria Tirumarbu Nachiar for Alwar-Tirunagari.

Birthday Adi Kritigai Tirtham Avani Krishna Chaturthi.

Koorathalwarswami (14) 1761 - 1772 (Kollam 936-947).

He came from Alwar-Tirunagari. He made the gold Koradu and a gold vahanam for the Nanguneri temple. He dug the Jeer Uthu at a cost of 5000 gold. This is a tank dug within the bed of the tank and it has a perpetual spring which is the only source of water during the hot season.

In his time also his relatives came to Nanguneri and the swami is said to have given them money. It is alleged that he purchased a house for his son at a high cost. Of course the allegations may not all be true but there must be some bit of truth in them.

In this swami's time in (946 Kollam) 1771 A.D. a junior was appointed and he executed an agreement with the stalattars with the permission of the swami.

Birthday Avani Barani Tirtham Chitrai Sukla Navami.

Srivatsa Chinnaswami (15) 1772-1783 (Kollam 947-958).

He was one Venkatakrishnamachar of Tirupathi. He made the Tilakams for the Perumal and the Nachiar. He renewed the jadibandanam for the Gods at a cost of 500 gold and celebrated their pratishtai at a cost of another 500 gold and gave food and rice to all people for 15 days.

He constructed a number of Ponakulams (small irrigation tanks) in the mutt lands and constructed their rivetments also.

In 950 Kollam the stalattars put in a petition requesting the swami to appoint one Srinivasa Aiyengar as junior and in 952 Kollam it was again renewed. During 957 Kollam he was unwell and Srinivasa Aiyengar came to the mutt and there was trouble and dispute as his prospective appointment was not liked by many. There is also an allegation that when this swami died within the Alagiavaradan the matter was not disclosed for a pretty long time until his successor was installed and the news was announced only thereafter.

Birthday Kartigai Poosam Tirtham Adi Sukla Shashti.

Tirunagari Tiruvenkataswami (16) 1783-1801 (Kollam 958 - 976). His name was Srinivasa Aiyengar and he was a native of Alwar-Tirunagari.

He made the Swarna kavacham for Deivanayaga.

He constructed the mantapam in front of the Jevanti mantapam and an image of his is sculptured in the ceiling of this mantapam and he did some other work within the temple at a cost of 200 gold.

He constructed the big car at Mannargudi and the Terku Vanamamalai mutt in Srirangam and secured maniams for the latter. There is a copper plate in the possession of the mutt at Nanguneri and it contains the details of some mamool prequisites for this mutt at Srirangam.

In his time his sons and relatives came in good strength to Nanguneri and there was trouble; but the outsiders had by this time grown strong in numbers and influence.

A Persian sanad dated 12th March 1797 A. D., granted to the mutt by Nawab Umdat-Ul-Umrah of Carnatic, records the gift to the jeer of a vast extent of landed property for the expenses connected with the management of the mutt and the feeding of travellers who resorted to it. This sanad was subsequently registered by the Collector of the Tinnevelly District on the first December 1814 and it is now in the possession of the mutt. A curious story is current regarding the circumstances which occasioned this grant. The Nawab's forces had camped in

front of the temple and , big Sribalimantapam round
proceeded to the temple of the temple and his
bly annoyed at the obstr mantapam. He started the
he gave vent to his ten Rupees and as it was found
notice of the commar te the work he started on a
that a high religious ure more funds and he died
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Birthday Udayavar pratishtai at Sriperum-
Krishna Panch onstructed the mutts at Triplicane,
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(Kollam 976–
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He mad thi.
the Utsava
quin, the F Kalyan Ramanuja Jeer (20) 1853—1867
He set u 1028—1042). His original name was
pa Aiyengar.

ido He made the gold sacred thread with ruby-set
r ogappu for the Nanguneri Perumal and repaired
some jewels.

He built the Paramapada north gate and consecrated the Sribali mantapam after having finished its construction in his time. He made the umpallak (palanquin) and also some silver vessels, irukaveri, Ivory chair, and poonjapparam and he purchased some pitambarams for the temple.

He started the floating festival and both the Margali festivals at Nanguneri. He set up feeding on a larger scale than formerly.

He built the Ramanuja mutt at Tirukurungudi and also the Vanamamalai mutt in that place. He repaired the Tolikina at Alwar-Tirunagari and made some palanquins.

In the year 1865 one Sangu Aiyer of Nanguneri complained to the Inam Commissioner that the mutt was not feeding travellers to the extent expected of it and the swami was misdirecting a good portion of the mutt resources for providing for his relatives. The Deputy Collector who inquired into the allegations reported that the feeding was no doubt not to the extent expected as only the Thengalai Vaishnavite brahmins of both the streets were fed on alternate days and other brahmins were treated with pretended kindness. He also definitely reported the fact that any savings from the mutt were utilised only for the benefit of the temple and as the funds were utilised for the laudable object of improving the temple and maintaining it the Inam Commissioner confirmed all the inams possessed by the mutt then. The Deputy Collector had also reported that the mutt was in a leaky condition and the 22nd Swami took up its repair and the present mutt owes its magnificent appearance to his fine taste.

Birthday Margali Tritheeai Tirtham Panguni Sukla Chathurthi.

Maduraikavi Ramanuja Jeer (21) 1867—1875 (Kollam 1042—1050). His name was Mannar Aiyengar.

He made the big car and had it dragged for the first time in 1874.

He made the golden Tolikina and Tandayam, golden Tirukaveri and Tiruveshegam etc. for the mutt.

He acquired the coffee estate at Tirukurungudi and initiated the Panguni Utsavam allotting the income from the estate for the expenses connected with this festival and he began the Manavalamahamuni Utsavam.

He made the Hamsavahanam for the Sriperumbudur temple, renewed the gold platform and the golden pillars for the Utsava idols in the Srirangam temple and made some jewels and purchased some silks for the Nanguneri temple. He purchased a Kannadi chappram for the temple at the cost of the mutt.

He influenced the Maravars of Nanguneri to build the Maravar mantapam in the West Mada Street and through one Kshitrapala Thevar of Marugalkurichi arranged the eighth day festival mandahappadi during the Chithrai festival.

Birthday Margali Tritheeai Tirtham Panguni Sukla Chathurthi.

Yogi Ramanuja swami alias Mamandoorswami (22) 1875—1883 (Kollam 1050—1058). He came from Mamandoor in the North Arcot District and was a very capable person.

He made the ruby Makarakanti for Deivanayaga and made the ruby-set-crown also. This Makarakanti is a very elegant and valuable one and is used to adorn Deivanayaga when the Sri Varamangai Nachiar is adorned with the diamond Makarakanti.

He constructed the front mantapam, the Alagiavaradan and other mantapams in the mutt and images of this swami are kept in the two mantapams in front of the mutt sannidhi. He made the golden palanquin, suratis and umbrellas for the mutt.

In his time he appointed one Gopala Aiyengar of Nanguneri as his junior to succeed him in case he would not survive a serious illness which overtook him. This Gopala Aiyengar, a very learned and pious gentleman, was originally engaged by the swami for conducting kalakshepam and when the swami fell ill he installed him as his junior. As fate would have it the swami recovered from his illness and the junior swami at the instigation of some local people began to give him trouble.

The swami tried to bring the junior round by offering him the option of staying in the mutt and enjoying all honours and going to the temple when the swami did not go there or staying at the Attalanalloor mutt comfortably enjoying the income from the very good nanjah lands possessed by the mutt in that village. The junior was not to be cajoled so easily. The whole village practically sided him and he stayed in the marava mantapam and conducted Sethi, feeding, Sevakalam and other functions and gave good lot of trouble by collecting the produce from the mutt lands and the swami himself had no stand-by in the village. The swami thereupon issued orders to the gate-keepers of the temple to restrain the junior from entering it. Two worshippers presented a petition to the District Magistrate praying for an injunction restraining the swami from interfering with the junior enjoying the privileges of a duly installed swami. There was an inquiry and the Collector passed orders adverse to the junior. The junior died shortly afterwards. His body was not given a burial within the Tiruvarasu compound and was buried in the vacant land between the Tiruvarasu compound and the tank bund and even the place is not identifiable now.

One day this Mamandoorswami had his noonday meal and while he was reclining in the room was found dead.

Birthday Adi Poosam Tirtham Margali Krishna Ekadasi.

Chinna Satagopa Ramanuja Swami (23)—24-12-1883—May 1896 (Kollam 1058—1071).

His name was Kuppar Aiyengar, son of Thambu Aiyengar of Nanguneri.

He constructed the Ramanuja Koodam in the mutt and also the granaries outside the mutt.

He made the silver masari, silver pots, vessels, umbrellas and some jewels for the temple and made canopies for the palanquin in the temple.

He consecrated the vimanam at a cost of Rs. 2000. He began the work of making the golden car with two lakhs of Rupees on hand for the purpose, built the car stand platform and purchased lands in the villages of Malayadiputhoor and Koilammalpuram.

He built the mutt at Srivilliputhoor and extended the one at Tentirupperi.

Birthday Ani Kettai Tirtham Vykasi Sukla Paurnami.

Chinna Pattarpiranswami (24) May 1896—February 1905 (Kollam 1071—1080).

His name was Tiruvengadatha Aiyengar.

He finished the golden car and started the procession of Deivanayaga and the Nachiar on the Panguni Uththaram day. An image of his is on the golden car. He made the silver palanquin, gold umbrella, gold pot, gold Navakalasam plate and Doopukal. He made the Satagopam and consecrated it.

He constructed the Melakoil at Nanguneri at a cost of about fifty thousand. That temple is at a distance of nearly 1½ miles from the mutt and is dedicated to Tiruvengadamudayan (Srinivasan). Except for a solitary archakar and a cook who go from Nanguneri every morning and evening for performing aradanam this temple is practically inaccessible to people and is not visited by any for worship. The main temple of Totadrinath is leaky in many places and the flooring of the temple is bad all throughout. This large amount spent in the construction of a modern unartistic structure like this new temple might have been more usefully spent on some useful item of repair within the temple. An image of this swami is placed in the Melakoil.

He made the silver kopparai and the silver lamp of the Alwar-Tirunagari temple and he made the stupi of the Alwar-Tirunagari temple at a cost of Rs. 6000.

Brithday Panguni Kartigai Tirtham, Masi Krishna Chathurthi. Chinna Kalyan Ramanuja

Jeer (25) February 1905—August 1933 (Kollam 1080—1109).

His name was Tirumalachariar, son of Govinda Aiyengar of Nanguneri.

He was the most outstanding personality among the matadhipathies of his time. Endowed with an arresting personal appearance and possessing a deep and erudite culture coupled with a thorough bred worldly wisdom and kindly liberality he easily outstrode the religious atmosphere of his time with an effect and imagination which still live after him. With his liberality he combined a thoroughness and an artistic outlook which left an impression on every function connected with the temple and the mutt. Most of the high officers of Government and most of the enlightened pilgrims used to make it a point to pay their respects to him and they used to express immense satisfaction at the all round accomplishment of this electric personality.

The most important of his achievements is the construction of the golden chappram called Punyakotivimanam. This golden chappram is next in importance only to the golden car but for artistic and tasteful finish it is not behind it. This chappram is used during the Panguni festival and this occasion attracts thousands of people to witness and admire its beauty.

He made the silver Tolikina, big golden Tolikina, ruby crown, big Prabhai, golden hood for the Adisesha behind Totadrinath. He also made a garland of sovereigns for the Nachiar and purchased very valuable and artistic pitambarams. He also made the golden Panchapathram and gold cups, gold Kalasappanai, Padikkam, gold lamp and gold Kumba and Uttarani.

He went on northern tours three times and earned for the mutt considerable amounts and spent these on the temple.

He purchased the villages of Pothaisuthi, Malayadiputhoor (portion), Salaipudur, Ilayaneri and Nadankoil for the mutt. These villages were purchased out of the amounts he earned from these tours.

Unfortunately during the last days of his regime a tirtham dispute cropped up in respect of the Alwar-Tirunagari temple and the mutt had to spend a heavy amount to defray the litigation charges and he also purchased one of the villages subject to a prior encumbrance. Both these charges have steeped the mutt in a heavy debt which has now accrued to nearly seventy thousands which on account of the falling prices of paddy the mutt is not able to discharge easily.

Birthday Chithrai Aswathi Tirtham Avani.

Chinna Maduraikavi Ramanuja jeer (26) 1933 A. D. (Kollam 1109. He was one Tiruvaradanam Nambi Aiyengar of Nanguneri and the son of Tirumalachariar. He is the present jeer. When the previous jeer was in a critical state of health he sent for his intended successor, a Sanskrit scholar and a fairly young man, with a view to install him as his successor. The latter's wife and relatives would not allow him and they secured him in safety. So the swami who was disappointed in his choice fixed upon the present jeer. This jeer has considerable experience of the temple and mutt affairs having been a kainkaryakar in the mutt for a long time. He is a very pious gentleman with a good amount of workable knowledge in religious literature and his kalakshepams are generally attended by cultured people with respect.

Owing to the present indebted condition of the mutt the jeer has applied the retrenchment axe in many directions without fear or favour and has become very unpopular ; but he is a strong-willed man and he knows his business best and he transacts many a difficult business without expert advice or the mediation of henchmen. His one aim is to clear off the debts in the shortest possible time and there is every indication that he can achieve this object. If only the price of paddy be favourable he will have a very easy walk over but

he does not feel perturbed as he is determined upon observing strict economy even in small items. It is regrettable that the Alwar-Tirunagari Tirtham dispute is still going on. It is desirable that some finality is arrived at soon. Happily there are not many Vaishnavites at Nanguneri who can be classed as constant or professional litigants and all people are anxious to see that this dispute ends some way soon and a fruitful source of expense is closed at the nearest future.

Of the swamis three had to leave the mutt under unfortunate circumstances and three had their demise outside Nanguneri. One swami died at Tirunarayanapuram, one at Hyderabad and one at Nadankoil.

The Tiruvarasu compound consisting of the Brindavanams of the swamis is situated near the Melakoil at a distance of more than a mile from the town. Each Brindavanam is a small masonry platform with the number of the swami inscribed on it. The three swamis who died elsewhere have their Brindavanams represented by vertical pillars representing the fact that they exist in the places mentioned on the slabs. It is desirable that each Brindavanam be provided with a vertical slab containing the name of the swami, the number and the date of demise. The present masonry platforms are likely to disappear by lapse of years.

CHAPTER V.

The various Sannidhis and structures within the temple

The presiding deity in this temple is Totadrinath. The Sanctum of Totadrinath is cut out of a rock in the bed of a tank. The idols in the sanctum are all cut out of the face of this rock. One side of the sanctum consists of the rock itself and the other three sides are enclosed by stone-built walls. The ceiling consists of cut stones coped up with the rock and supported by stone-built walls. It is said that the space between the face of the rock and the sannidhi Garudan is all one block of stone.

The relative positions of the various Gods in the sanctum are as follow :- Totadrinath is seated in the middle. Sri Devi and Surya are on the right with Urvasi standing behind them with chamaram in her hand. On the left of Totadrinath are Bhu Devi and Chandra with Tilottama standing behind with chamaram. Below this collection are seated Brigu and Markanda Rishi on both sides. Adisesha holds his golden hood over the head of Totadrinath. In the sanctum we have also the Nitya Utsavar (Selvar) seated on one side.

In the centre of the mantapam in front of the sanctum there is a gold plated platform with a

gold covered mantapam supported by gold plated pillars. On this platform are seated the utsava idol of Deivanayaga with his Ubayanachiars Srivaramangai Nachiar and Sri Andal. The idol of Deivanayaga is an exquisite piece of iconographic work. Jewels and other decorations are embossed on the golden kavacham of the vigraham so much so that the idol looks bejewelled even when not adorned by any jewels. To the right of Deivanayaga is seated Srivaramangai Nachiar an equally fine specimen. To the left of Deivanayaga Andal is standing at one end of this group. The jewels that adorn these idols are made with such a consideration for taste and finish that the idols with the valuable jewels bedecking them and the motely sweet scented flowers that they are garlanded with in good taste are a feast to the eyes and the heart. On certain special days Srivaramangai Nachiar wears a very valuable diamond Makarakanti with emerald pendants, a crown with very big sized emeralds of enormous value and brilliancy, diamond Kammals and many other valuables besides very attractive pitambarams and on those occasions Deivanayaga wears a very valuable ruby Makarakanti with fine pendants and a very large number of other valuable jewels and silks and a very beautiful crown set with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. God Deivanayaga is decorated with hands and legs made of gold decked with very valuable diamonds

(Abayasthain and Tirukkai). The occasions attract lot of worshippers and they occur only four times a year, once during Vaikunta Ekadasi, once during the Kanuvu festival, once during the Chitrai festival and once during Purattasi Punarvasu.

There are no doubt fine idols in other temples but for the fine taste exhibited in adorning the idols and the studied elegance achieved in the make up of the jewels the authority in charge of the temple viz the head of the mutt deserves all credit. The gold lamps, the silver lamps, the massive gold vessels brought into service impart an added grandeur to the display of jewels and flowers on many occasions. To add to all this the worshipper can find in this temple a real interest and enthusiasm on the part of the archakars and the temple servants in serving the worshippers and a cosmopolitan sort of treatment is meted out to all votaries irrespective of any sect or community they belong to. There is no provocative sort of worry by any archaka or temple servant as we find in many places and a sort of dignified atmosphere prevails within the temple due to the regular visit of the head of the mutt every day.

Just below the golden platform on the northern side we have the Utsava Idols of Chackrathalwar, Kannan of the main temple, Kannan of the Manavar sannidhi and Vananayaga with the

Ubayanachiars. Formerly Vananayaga was within the sanctum itself and it was one of the principal deities in the temple when Nammalwar visited this temple but it has been removed to its present place to safe-guard it from any possible damage due to the daily oil bath and the occasional grand oil bath that God Totadrinath undergoes. It is difficult to account for the name of Vananayaga possessed by this idol. It is a big and fine featured idol relating to the period prior to the 8th century A. D. and shows absolutely no sign of having worn out in any manner. The temple is called Vanamamalai, the country was called Vanavanadu and this idol might have been named Vananayaga suggesting that it meant Lord of Vanamamalai. It is one of the five bherams in the temple and it was an important object of worship formerly.

The prakaram round the sanctum is called Tirunadamaligai and the Gods are not taken in procession through this prakaram. Originally this prakaram was very dark and Pattarbiranswami removed the stone slabs covering the space between the Vimanam and the mantapams and closed the space with iron bars and there is plenty of light now. The previous jeer has repaired the flooring of this prakaram. In this prakaram there are thirty-two idols representing rishis of whom some had been women. In this collection Vigneswara finds a place. There is an idol of Vaikanasamuni

with the front tuft. Namam is placed on the foreheads of all these idols and Vigneswara has been honoured by conversion to Vaishnavism as his disproportionately big namam indicates. It is worth while to investigate whether some of these idols are Buddhistic relics as history records that a portion of Nanjanad was once a Buddhistic and Jaina centre and Vanamamalai might have been influenced by the two faiths to some extent though there is no recorded evidence to prove this fact. Often it has happened that the relics in many temples found their safe custody in bigger and well protected temples when there was an invasion by an alien army or some sort of persecution. Some such thing might have happened in respect of these idols.

In front of the mantapam containing the Utsava idols we have another mantapam. On one side of this mantapam the Utsava idols of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are installed. Originally these vigrahams were allotted places along with their moolavigrahams in the Rama sannidhi near the Vadakku Nachiar sannidhi in the second prakaram and these Utsava idols were removed to their present positions to safeguard them from molestation at the hands of the Muhammadans. This traditional account appears to have some value as a historical fact as during the time of the Nawab's sway over Kalakad his forces frequently camped

near the temple. The misdeeds of Chandasahib's forces at Sucheendrum and Tinnevelly might have created a dread in the minds of the authorities of this temple and they might have taken some precautionary measures to safeguard their idols. Once removed from their original positions the new positions have become permanent for these idols. To a casual onlooker the present sannidhi in which these idols are installed looks like a temporary arrangement as only a portion of the open mantapam is enclosed by brass railings and improvised as an enclosure.

Next to the Rama sannidhi we have the Vishvaksenar sannidhi. In the middle of the mantapam we have the Sannidhi Garudan.

On the southern side of this mantapam we have the Chackrathalwar sannidhi. Next to it we have a store room where the God's silks and pitambarams were used to be kept formerly.

The walls round the Vimanam and the walls round the inner mantapam have a good lot of inscriptions in old Tamil. Most of them have been obliterated by oil deposits and chunam coating. A portion of them on the front wall has been copied by the late Mr. Gopinath Rao and he has not published the substance thereof. It is hoped that the epigraphical department will soon make arrangements for copying these inscriptions.

The Dwarapalakas on both sides of the doorway of this mantapam as well as on both sides of the entrance to the sanctum are very fine though they bear marks of wear and tear due to the lapse of centuries they had survived. Their foreheads are disfigured in the attempt to chisel out Namams thereon when there had been none originally.

When the tank is full water stagnates to a depth of some feet round the vimanam and it percolates into the sanctum at times and has to be thrown out. This is a clear indication that the rock on which God Totadrinath is seated and the temple itself were originally included in the bed of the big tank.

The big mantapam in front of the above mantapam is called the Kulasekara mantapam. It is a spacious structure constructed by Kulasekaraperumalrajah of Travancore. Next to the Virappanaick mantapam it is the biggest mantapam in size and it is more important than all the mantapams in the temple. The festivals and the daily sevakalam and Sahasranamam goshties take place there. The Unjal Utsavam that takes place every friday is held in this mantapam. In one of the pillars of this mantapam there is a figure of Lakshminarasimha and opposite to it on another pillar there is a figure of Sri Nataraja and as usual the latter figure is smashed to a considerable extent.

Opposite to this mantapam there are two pillars containing life-like images of a king and his minister. The minister has sacred thread and his features and dress make him appear as a brahmin. The king is said to be Kulasekaraperumal rajah. Though he has the Travancore head dress the absence of the sacred thread which the Travancore kings usually possess creates some doubt if the image is that of a Travancore king. Its position at the entrance to the Kulasekaraperumal mantapam is no doubt a strong evidence in favour of this presumption. Further the old Travancore kings had all moustache as this image also has and the habit of wearing the sacred thread might have been adopted only after their matrimonial connections with the Koil Thampoorans. This is a matter which cannot be stated with any authority in this treatise. It is only an oral statement obtained from a pandit in Trivandrum thrown into this book for clearing the above doubt and we may thankfully accept any elucidation on this point from the pen of some one who has made a research on this subject.

The next enclosure is the inner prakaram. In this prakaram we have very interesting sculptural pieces on the walls around. The first group represents Vigneswara surrounded by men and women with drums and old musical instruments that were in vogue evidently during the time of the Pandyas.

The second group represents a female deity surrounded by damsels. The third group represents Lakshminarayana worshipped by devotees. The fourth represents a dance scene in which women have taken part. The fifth represents God Nataraja dancing accompanied by people playing queer old musical instruments and Nataraja's legs are broken. The sixth group consists of Venugopalaswami and his cow with the shepherd companions. The seventh represents Garuda dancing and Hanuman accompanying him on the Thappu and other male and female musicians playing different instruments. The eighth is a social dance in which men and women have taken part and a number of musical instruments are exhibited. The ninth represents a king consoling his queen surrounded by armed attendants probably on the eve of proceeding to a fight or to a hunt. The tenth relates to an incident connected with Trivikrama. The eleventh represents Totadrinath and the attendant deities. The twelfth is Deivanayaga worshipped by devotees. The thirteenth is a dance and a kolattam. The fourteenth represents Parvathi with other attendant deities. The figures in this group are all mutilated. The fifteenth represents God Subramanya with a deer and some female figures. The sixteenth is Tirunageswara with Parvathi. It may be mentioned here that Tirunageswara is the presiding deity of the local Saiva temple. The

seventeenth represents a social dance by men and women. The ninteenth is a very interesting religious dance and the figures in this group are badly mutilated. The twentieth represents God Subramania with Valli and Devasena worshipped by devotees. The twenty-first represents Vishnu riding on a lion and Vigneswara dancing accompanied by musicians playing all sorts of old and queer musical instruments.

The above sculptural pieces are very remarkable. They represent Saivite and Vaishnavite objects of worship. One record says that the first jeer constructed the inner prakaram and the Vadakku Nachiar and the Terku Nachiar sannidhis and the small gopuram. It is improbable that he could have constructed the outer walls of the prakaram and introduced all these Saivite objects therein. He might have constructed the Vadakku Nachiar and the Terku Nachiar sannidhis and the small gopuram. The positions of the two Nachiar sannidhis and their mantapams clearly indicate that they have been squeezed into an already existing square and there has been a struggle for space to house these structures in their present positions. There is at any rate the probability that the outer walls of this prakaram were repaired or rebuilt later on and the existing sculptural pieces carefully removed during the process and replaced during reconstruction. Even then the Saivite objects would have been kept off

ROJA MUTHIAH,
ARTIST:
KOTTAIYUR P. O.

from being exhibited. Anyhow a cursory glance at these sculptural relics suggests to us that they must be many centuries old. It is regrettable that the fine figures of Nataraja should have all been mutilated. It cannot be the work of Muhammadans as the Vaishnavite objects remain intact.

Under the small gopuram and in the mantapam of the Vadakku Nachiar sannidhi there are images of a kingly benefactor. The image of the same king that was kept under the Terku Nachiar sannidhi has been removed and is kept under the Manavala sannidhi a very recent construction. Probably this king constructed those structures at the influence of the jeer. Who this king was is not easily ascertainable. That he should have ruled over a fairly big tract of country is certain as an image of his is kept under the mantapam in front of the Nataraja sannidhi at Papanasam. These images are represented with long conical caps resembling fools' caps and pretty good amount of jewellery and the bichua or short sword. This part of the country was under the Travancore kings then and this royal patron might have been a Travancore ruler or a viceroy of his. A fuller investigation is required in respect of this matter.

In the inner prakaram near the Vadakku Nachiar's sannidhi we have the Rama sannidhi. The three idols of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are

masterpieces of workmanship. They occupy very unimportant positions in this temple.

At the eastern end of this prakaram we have the Alwar sannidhi. The Moolavars and the Utsavars are here. Nammalwar does not find his place in this group as an idol of his is in the Satagopam (Satari) itself.

Next to this sannidhi we have the Udayavar and the Koorathalwar sannidhis. The next sannidhi is that of Pillailokacharya and both the moola and Utsava vigrahams are in this sannidhi.

In this prakaram, on the northern side, there is the Paramapada gate and it is opened during Vaikunta Ekadasi alone. In this prakaram the Rappathu and Pagalpathu Utsavams are celebrated during the month of Margali.

In the ceiling of the Chinna Gopuram God Padmanabha and his attendant deities are sculptured. This is a clear evidence to show that some Travancore ruler was responsible for the construction of the smaller gopuram and the Nachiar sannidhis though they were constructed during the first jeer's time.

The next prakaram containing the Sri Balimantapam is called the outer prakaram. It is a grand rectangular square of four mantapams of

large dimensions constructed at a cost of more than a lakh of Rupees, a big sum even for those ancient days. It was built by Periapattarbiranswami and his image is kept in that mantapam.

Adjoining the above mantapam there is the Virappanayak Mantapam. It is a masterpiece of the Nayak style of architecture resembling the hundred pillared mantapams in the temples of Conjeeveram, Madura and other places. The pillars are exquisite specimens of sculptural work, each pillar containing a number of smaller pillars and lifelike and magnificent images all worked out of a single stone. Lot of fine details are worked into the figures and even small beads are finely shaped and the muscles and limbs are so well shaped that the human appearance is very nearly approached. Particularly one representation in one of the pillars of this mantapam is very interesting. It is that of Rama embracing Hanuman and expressing gratitude for the latter's having accomplished his mission and brought the Anguliyam (ring) of Sita in token of his having discovered the latter in Lanka. Another figure in one of the pillars is a highly frightening one. It is a representation of a fierce warrior trampling on a crouchant woman with drawn up sword in his hand. The yalis in the pillars are very magnificent and stone balls are worked into their mouths where they roll without dropping out. This mantapam was constructed by

Virappa Nayak, the Nayak ruler of Madura and his image is kept at the entrance to the Venugopala swami sannidhi. This image was originally kept in a small mantapam within the centre of this big mantapam. It has been removed to the entrance of the Venugopalaswami sannidhi and a big mantapam has now been constructed in brick and mortar on the spot. There is an equestrian statue of Virappa on one of the pillars of Virappa Nayak mantapam. In this mantapam the oil Tirumanjanam (Ennaikappu) of Sri Varamangai Nachiar takes place during the month of Margali.

Behind the Virappa Nayakan mantapam we have the sannidhis of Lakshmi-Narayana and Lakshmivaraha.

Adjacent to the Virappa Nayakan mantapam we have the Venugopalan sannidhi. There are in this sannidhi the idols of Venugopalan, Rukmani and Satyabama. The Venugopal idol is a very fine specimen of its kind.

The sannidhi next to it is Dasavatarar sannidhi. In front of the Dasavatarar sannidhi we have the Manavalar sannidhi. The platform and the mantapam housing the Utsava idols are plated with gold and the idol seated on this platform is very attractive. In this sannidhi there is the image of a king in one of the pillars of the small mantapam in the

centre. This image looks like the one in the mantapam in front of the Vadakku Nachiar sannidhi and under the small gopuram. It is said that this image and the mantapam in which it existed were removed from the middle of the Terku Nachiar's sannidhi and placed in the middle of Manavalar sannidhi to give the latter the appearance of an ancient construction. In a pillar on a wall in one of the sides of this sannidhi we see a big and lifelike image of a king. The image has sacred thread and all emblems of royalty and it has no moustache. Judged from the above facts and from the fact it has the Travancore head dress it must be the image of a Travancore king. Quite likely it is the image of Kulasekaraperumal rajah. It might have been somewhere within the Kulasekara mantapam or near the front mantapam and might have followed the example of the other image that existed under the Terku Nachiar's sannidhi by having shifted itself to the more recent construction. If we consider this image as that of Kulasekaraperumal rajah we have difficulty in deciding that the image in front of the Kulasekara mantapam is that of Kulasekaraperumal raja. Some research is necessary in respect of this matter.

Between the Dwajastambam and the principal gateway of the temple there is the Jeyanti mantapam. It is a fine imposing structure next in grandeur only to the Virappa Nayak mantapam. The God starts in procession from this mantapam

and usually alights here on most of the festival occasions. This mantapam is said to have been built by one Jayanti Rajah. Some say it was by a Jevanti Nayak. Who this Jayanti Rajah or Jevanti Nayak was is not known. One thing is certain. He should have been an important ruler over this part of the country during some particular period. We have the Jevanti vasal in the Sankarankoil temple. We have Jevantipuram in the Nanguneri taluq and Jevantipuram in Ambasamudram taluq also. Some pannaiyars of Vijianarayanam in the Nanguneri taluq have named their new born children as Jevanti manna Marthandam. These pannaiyars are Vellalars and a member of that family is Mr. Marthandam Pillai, an advocate in Madras and a former M. L. C. How these people have adopted the practice of naming some of their children Jevanti mannar deserves to be investigated. The images of Jayanti Rajah and his whole family including his brothers and queens are placed in this mantapam. The Rajah has a high crown over his head and the dress, the jewels and the fashion in which the hairlocks of the queens are arranged suggest that Jayanti Rajah should have been a Nayak ruler. There are two yalis at the entrance to this mantapam and two stone balls are worked into their mouths. They are not apparent from the outside; but if we insert our fingers into the mouth of any of these yalis we feel the stone balls rolling in. This fact suggests that

this mantapam should have been constructed during the Nayak period as this same art is found in the Virappa Nayak mantapam also. Like the Gangaikondan mantapams at Conjeeveram and Triplicane this mantapam might have been used for receiving the God for sometime during the festivals so that the God even now stops here for a time before starting in procession and after return from the procession.

Round this Jayanti mantapam we have a prakaram. On one side of this prakaram we have a platform on which are kept the vehicles of the Gods (vahanams). This platform is secured by doors made of iron bars and zinc sheets. These doors are said to have been made during the time of the previous swami. The mantapams round this prakaram were constructed either by or during the time of Tirunagari Tiruvenkataswami and his image is sculptured on the ceiling in the front mantapam. Underneath on a pillar there is the image of a marava chieftain or poligar. The mantapam itself might have been constructed by the marava chieftain during the time of the above swami.

The outer and bigger gopuram of the temple was built by the fourth jeer and his images are sculptured on both sides of this gopuram.

The mantapam in front of the temple and the mutt was built by the maravars and the image of

a marava who was responsible for its construction is kept at the entrance to this mantapam on the southern side. It is a spacious and fine mantapam constructed quite recently during the time of Mamandoorswami. The southern side of this mantapam opens into the Kacheri street which was formerly a very important one while the now prosperous sannidhi street was formerly a scattered row of miserable-looking houses.

Just outside the main entrance of the temple we have the Vanamamalai mutt. It is an irregular block of structures which have grown round a very modest building obtained from Pushpanjali sanyasi. The small mutt was gradually extended by additions and they are all kept intact. The front portion called the Aranganagarappan mantapam and the mantapam in front of 108 Tirupathi sannidhi were constructed during the time of Mamandoorswami and his images are kept in both these mantapams. The other additions have been touched in the chapter on the mutt. One remarkable feature about the mutt is that they have not pulled down the old structures though they were not very imposing or convenient for the needs of a rich mutt.

The mantapam on the opposite side of the mutt in front of the temple is now used as a granary by the mutt. It has a wooden mantapam with steps and it was formerly used for some function during

the Kanuvu festival. There is the image of a marava chieftain in this mantapam also. It is not known who this chieftain was. This mantapam was formerly used as a Kacheri during the time of the Nawab. Even after the administration passed into the hands of the East India Company and the temple administration passed into the hands of the Government, this mantapam was used as a Kacheri as temple administration was part of Governmental machinery. As already mentioned the street adjacent to this mantapam is even now called Kacheri street.

CHAPTER VI.

The oil well and its antiquity

One of the interesting items of service in this temple is the oil bath Tirumanjanam (Ennai-kappu) that God Totadrinath undergoes every day. Six Madras measures of gingili oil are poured over the head of Totadrinath every day and on special occasions 112 Madras measures of gingili oil are likewise poured over him. A proportionate quantity of sandalwood oil is also mixed up with this oil and after the oil bath scented powders and preparations are used for washing out the oil. Water from tender cocoanuts, milk and other Tirumanjanam (abishekam) samans are poured over the God in succession and the whole thing is allowed to flow

out through a stone-built drain and gradually stagnate in a stone-built receptacle and the decanted oil is removed and poured into a big well called the Ennai-kinar (oil well).

This system had been in vogue for centuries and the oil in the present well is therefore many centuries old. The well is exposed to the sun and the rain and as the oil is mixed up with the sandal-wood oil, cocoanut water, spices, milk and so many other things that form part of the Tirumanjanam service, the long exposure to the sun's heat of this place, which suffers the extremes of temperature, has given the oil in this well a medicinal value and patients of all kinds are attracted to this place from all parts of India at all seasons of the year.

In his materia medica called the Paripoornananooru, Agastya has made mention of this well. There is a chapter on 'Karma-vyadis' i. e. leucoderma and leprosy. There he has prescribed for the patient suffering from leprosy a course of treatment by taking in both mornings and evenings a kasu weight of oil from this well for three months. He says, "South - east of Papanasam there is a Narayana kshetram. Go there, worship the God, feed 100 brahmins, pour a chembu-ful of gingili oil into the oil well there and take out from that well another chembu of oil and take in a kasu-weight of that oil both mornings and evenings for

three months and you will be rid of leprosy". For all other diseases including leucoderma he has prescribed medicines and for leprosy alone he has prescribed the oil from the well. This shows that its medicinal value was recognised even before Agastya's time 2500 years ago. This fact is evidently better recognised in Northern India than in Southern India and a large number of North Indian lepers flock to Nanguneri and stay on for treatment.

Some months ago a North Indian who stayed at Nanguneri for about a year taking in this oil returned home completely bettered according to his statement. Another North Indian leper who was very bad is now fast improving and there seems to be a fair chance of his shaking off this incurable disease. A good number of North Indian lepers go over here and leave the place at once taking with them cans of oil from the well. At one time there were dozens of them at Nanguneri and the fear of their contaminating the sources of water supply was so great that they had to be expelled from Nanguneri. When they stay on in small numbers nobody interferes with them. When they come in strength they create a regular nuisance by crowding near the bus-stand and begging for alms and visiting every home for begging. The mutt feeds these people only for the first three days and thereafter these people have to stand on their own resources.

At present the patients smear the oil over their bodies in the mornings and allow it to soak their skins till late in the evenings and thereafter bathe in cold water in the local tank. Even allopathic doctors seem to advise oil smearing as a cure for leprosy. So this mode of treatment may have a value.

The oil well is situated behind the Virappa Nayakan mantapam and if we approach the well during day time the oil-soaked bank of the well heated by the sun actually scalds the feet. A small mud pot and a rope are kept near the well. The patient who requires oil from this well has to hand over to the temple authorities an equal quantity of fresh gingili oil to enable him to get a supply of oil from this well in exchange.

Some years ago this well which was in good condition all these centuries showed signs of percolation through the bottom surface. So another well was constructed close by and the oil from the previous well let into the new well by a sluice and the old well is now kept empty.

It is desirable the oil from this well be analysed and if found to possess the medical value claimed for it be supplied to leper asylums for being tried on the patients. Lt. Col. Sastri, I. M. S., having heard of this well visited it and saw some of the lepers undergoing treatment with this oil. What opinion he formed of the efficiency of this treatment is not

known. One thing has been done. The contagion of leprosy has spread over Nanguneri and there are now a large number of lepers at Nanguneri and the surrounding places and these people patiently suffer from its bad effects without resorting to a course of treatment with this oil evidently as nearness and easy accessibility to this remedy have failed to induce in their minds the faith that is necessary for the auto-suggestion to facilitate a quick cure. The North Indian brethren come all the way from the north and they undergo the treatment with faith. The tinker who sells oil cans for the North Indian pilgrims and the man who solders the lids of the cans after they are filled with the oil make a roaring business and the temple servant in charge of this well is also benefited to a substantial degree.

As for the sandalwood oil mixed with the oil used for the Tirumanjanam there is a family of brahmins at Nanguneri who possess the exclusive privelege of supplying the sandalwood oil to the temple. The family is endowed a service inam for the purpose and the service is regularly carried on. Though the present holder of the inam is a sholiya smartha brahmin wearing namam, his ancestor, the original grantee, was named Padmanabha pandithan. Probably the grant was by a Travancore king. The purpose of the grant is mentioned as supplying sandalwood oil for Ennai-kilivu. 'Ennai-kilivu' is a Travancore term. The present holder

does not possess any of the grants or sanads which recorded the gift but from the Inam Commissioner's endorsement it is noticed that the then existing inamdar presented a sanad in Persian, Mahratti and Tamil dated 26th Panguni of Fasli 1192 or 2nd of Jamadulawal of Hijiri 1197 addressed to Amil Amrutalinga Mudali ordering him to assign to the holder $5\frac{1}{16}$ kotahs of land usually enjoyed by one Padmanabhan Pandithan for supplying sandalwood oil for Totadrinath as usual. It is a known fact that the inam commissioner confirmed all grants of lands enjoyed by the respective owners for 50 years prior to 1865 and grants by the Nawab had generally confirmed those which were given in previous regimes and it is fairly certain that this service had been going on for some centuries and the fact that a former brahmin holder had the title of pandithan is a clear proof that the duty of preparation of the sandalwood oil was entrusted to a Vaid.

CHAPTER VII.

The income and expenditure of the temple and mutt

The temple has not much of landed property. It has only a tope at Sengalakurichi and it cannot be considered a valuable one. It receives a tasdik allowance of Rs. 6000 from Government. This

amount is handed over to the jeer and he has to manage also the temples of Nageswara Sasta Anjaneya and Vadakkuvasal Chelliamman. Small amounts of tasdik allowance are fixed for these temples and as the jeer is in charge of these non-Vaishnavite temples also he provides funds from his own mutt over and above the tasdik allowance fixed for these temples.

The mutt has a vast extent of landed property. Some of them are inam lands and most of them are lands purchased by the jeers out of the savings from the perquisites and presents obtained by the jeers. The inam lands were endowed by the Travancore kings, the Nayak rulers and the Nawab of the Carnatic and the ayan lands possessed by the mutt were purchased by some of the recent incumbents of the mutt. The mutt has a coffee estate on the Tirukurungudi hills the income from which is earmarked for the expenses incurred in celebrating the Panguni festival; but of late the estate has deteriorated and the mutt has to spend for the festival from other sources of income also.

The mutt pays an amount of Rs. 13000 to Government as kist including about Rs. 3000 the quit rent for the inams possessed by the mutt. The Government kist for the coffee estate is Rs. 360. Of course these figures relate to properties in the Nanguneri taluq. The properties

possessed by the branches in other parts of India are not taken into account. Among the latter some are self-supporting and in many cases the mutt is making monthly remittances for the up-keep of the branch institutions.

The mutt has buildings in Tinnevelly and Nanguneri and the annual rents from these buildings amount to about Rs. 6000.

The paddy income of the mutt is placed at 7000 kotahs (a kotah is equivalent to 112 Madras measures) of paddy per annum. If paddy sells at Rs. 10 per kotah the mutt can realise 50 or 60 thousands as generally all the 7000 kotahs will not be collected every year and there will be lot of outstandings most of which may be liable to be written off. The current price of paddy is Rs. 6 per kotah and so the mutt can get only 30 or 35 thousands as paddy income at present. The gross earnings of the mutt including paddy income, rents on buildings, presents to the jeer and income from occasional charities will not now exceed 50 or 60 thousands at the most. So the mutt is not now in a satisfactory condition as far as its finances are considered.

As against this income they have lot of unavoidable expenses. They have to pay a kist of Rs. 13000 annually and a good amount as contribution for the Endowment Board, spend a good amount for temple management, a large

amount for the daily feeding in the mutt and there are the other charities besides. The brahmin feeding in the mutt takes away 500 kotahs of paddy and nearly Rs. 3,000 or 4,000 per annum. This will work at 7 or 8 thousands and even more per annum. The mutt spends more than Rs. 10,000 per annum on the temple. The mutt maintains a huge establishment besides an elephant, a camel and some horses and big sized bulls not to speak of the human hands to manage them. There are the various religious functions which cost enormously and the patasalas, prasadams and occasional donations for religious and secular purposes consistent with the position of a famous institution leave very little margin to divert into other pressing and unavoidable items of expenditure.

The mutt has now a huge debt of nearly Rs. 70000. The present jeer is a very capable personage and he is a strict financier. He has effected drastic economy in all the branches of administration and work in the temple and the mutt is carried on with a minimum staff. Emoluments have been curtailed to the irreducible minimum. Tittams have been reduced to a very low level. These institutions which saw plenty and liberality in every function from feeding upwards to the procession are now witnessing the maximum amount of economy which will be apparent even to

a casual onlooker. For instance the number of torches during the procession has been so far reduced as to make the beautifully decked deities difficult to be inspected satisfactorily. Where 10 or 20 measures were used for a particular prasadam formerly only 2 measures are now allotted. Where there were half a dozen servants formerly a single man now carries on. In spite of these there is tightness for funds and if this drastic and stringent economy is continued for some more years the debts will be wiped out soon.

With all its economy the mutt can put by only Rs. 5000 annually for the discharge of debts. There was failure of crops during the three previous years. This year the out-turn has been satisfactory and if this state of things continues for some years there won't be much difficulty. The present jeer has reduced the debts considerably. At present the mutt has to pay off a debt of Rs. 55 thousand on a mortgage of some property at a low rate of interest and they have some other sundry debts to the tune of some ten thousand or less. As repayment is prompt when even small funds are available there is every hope that the debts can be cleared off soon.

Formerly the jeers used to tour in the northern parts and earn lot of income. Even when the jeers were at headquarters they used to get a good

lot of presents. Now the present jeer wants to start on tour only after discharging the debts. Further he does not relish taxing his disciples in a period of financial stringency. A proposal by Mr. Jagannada Aiyangar a former agent to raise a lottery fund was rejected by the jeer with scorn. The people who used to visit the temple and the mutt occasionally and present good amounts to the jeer are not now coming in such good numbers. If at all the mutt is visited by the outsiders the latter are mostly from Northern India and some of the North Indian disciples occasionally send remittances also.

The facilities in the temple and the mutt are great. The shrine of Totadrinath is very famous. The disciples are treated very honourably. The means of communication are very good. Still the number of disciples visiting the mutt is dwindling day by day while the expenditure has to be kept on. It is wished that every disciple and well-wisher of the mutt should consider these things with interest and pay occasional visits to these institutions which were so beloved of their forefathers.

Even non-vaishnavites and the non-brahmins will be surprised to notice the complete absence of bigotry or exclusiveness on the part of the Vanamamalai jeer and there is no provocative distinction of any sort in the temple. The visitor will

also be surprised to notice the thoroughly democratic and cosmopolitan treatment he will receive within the walls of these institutions and he will be welcome at all times of the day and the easy accessibility of the place must also be a cause of attraction to all tourists who travel to the Cape passing the imposing tower of the Nanguneri temple.

CHAPTER VIII.

The festivals and worship in the temple

One peculiar feature about this temple is that almost every day the pilgrim can witness some festival or other. Even on ordinary days the decorations and the service are generally grander than in many other temples as the jeer visits the temple for worship every day. There is Sevakalam every day and there is vocal music of a kind every time the Aradanam is conducted. Pipe music and drumming are carried on longer and more frequent than in other temples and the temple piper, the drummer and musician are all whole-time servants. The service of the Devadasis is not dispensed with in this temple which is the proud possessor of Devadasis on the wrong side of 70 years. One noteworthy feature in their service is the Abinayam that is exhibited before the God and the God only can understand the peculiar charm

and the esoteric significance underlying the paralytic movements of these old women with shrivelled limbs and gray locks. This service militates against the modern time spirit and can be given up without violating the canons of Agamic worship.

In the mornings at about 7 a. m. we have the Viswaroopa-darsanam and in about half an hour thereafter the Ennai-kappu or the daily oil bath takes place and after the usual Tirumanjanam the daily routine that is followed in other temples is followed here also.

In the evenings we have the usual routine that is followed in other temples but in this temple there is the daily sevakalam and tirtham is distributed only after the goshti is over. At about 9 P. M. we have the Tiruvishagam service. This is the daily routine but this simple programme will be followed only on very few days as during the major portion of the year there is some festival or other and on those days there will be all sorts of service in the temple or in the mutt throughout the whole day.

The principal festivals are the Panguni Utsavam and the Chitrai Utsavam which take place during the months of Panguni and Chitrai respectively. The Panguni festival is celebrated exclusively by the mutt from out of the income from the coffee estate. The mutt also meets the expenses

over and above the income from the estate. The Chitrai festival is attended by people from all parts of India and there will be enormous crowd on all the eleven days. Both the festivals go on for ten days and on the eleventh day there is the Tirthawari. During the Panguni Utsavam we have the golden car on the 10th day and during the Chitrai Utsavam we have the wooden car on the 10th day. Both the festivals start with a big Ennai-kappu festival when 140 Madras measures of gingili oil are poured over Totadrinath and Tirumanjanam performed with 1000 conchful of water during midday and there will be sandal bath during the night. It will be worth while to describe the programme for each day of the festival.

1st day: There will be the grand Ennai-kappu for Totadrinath in the morning and in the night there will be Garudavahanam for Deivanayaga and Gajalakshmivahanam for the Nachiar.

2nd day: Simhavahanam for Deivanayaga and Kamalavahanam for the Nachiar.

3rd day: Hanumarvahanam for Deivanayaga and Kilivahanam for the Nachiar.

4th day: Alumpallakku for both Perumal and Nachiar together.

5th day: Garudavahanam for Deivanayaga, Hamsavahanam for Nachiar and Kili vahanam for Andal.

6th day : Anaivahanam for Deivanayaga and Gajalakshmivahanam for Nachiar.

7th day : Gold Chappram (Punyakotivimanam) for Deivanayaga in the evening at 5-30 p. m. and in the night Kannadi Chappram for Deivanayaga and Nachiar together.

8th day : Kudiraivahanam for Perumal and Seshavahanam for Nachiar.

9th day : Chandraprabai for Perumal and Nachiar together.

10th day : Tiruppallakku for both.

11th day : Vetti-ver Chappram for Deivanayaga and Nachiar separately.

During the festivals all the brahmins are fed and such of the non-brahmins as are disciples of the mutt can have their food. Even otherwise lot of prasadams can be had from the temple at a small cost.

During the month of Vykasi we have the Vasanthotsavam. There will be a procession and Chaityopacharam for 10 days within the temple.

In the month of Adi we have the Andal Utsavam. There will be a procession each day in the Sribali mantapam within the temple.

During the month of Avani we have the Tiruppavitrotsavam. There will be a procession through

the mada streets for 7 days and on the 7th day there will be Tirthawari.

In the month of Purattasi the Navarathri festival is celebrated for 9 days and there will be procession within the temple all the nine days.

In the month of Arpasi the Unjal Utsavam is celebrated for ten days. The Manavala Utsavam takes place for ten days in this month.

In the month of Kartigai there is the Tirukartigai Utsavam.

In the month of Margali we have the Adyayanotsavam. There will be Rappathu and Pagalpathu Utsavams during this month and they are very interesting.

In the month of Thai there is the Kanuvu festival for 7 days.

In the month of Masi the floating festival takes place.

The above is a rough list of the festivals that take place in this temple during the several months of the year. Besides the Udayavar Utsavam takes place along with the Chitrai festival. During the Chitrai festival there is a procession for Sri Rama on the 4th day.

From the above list it will be seen there is some festival every month. Besides, there are two festivals of ten days each in connection with the birthday of the 1st jeer and the previous jeer. The other 24 jeers have their own Tirunakshatrams and those occasions are celebrated on a grand scale. Besides, the previous swamis have their tirthams (annual ceremonies) and those days are also commemorated on a grand scale and feedings on a large scale are undertaken. In this way the Vaishnavites of Nanguneri are always fixed up to the temple and the mutt and there is the concomitant feeding also. For mere feeding or for a pittance the local Vaishnavites do service which cannot be procured in other places even for very decent remuneration. A sort of parochial feeling and self-content and the love of their own local temple and the mutt keep them attached to these institutions in an exemplary manner.

Every day we have the Viswaroopam, the Tiruvandi-kappu, Ennai-kappu, Sevakalam and Tiruvishagam besides the various Tirumanjanams. In this way, even during the ordinary days, except for a few hours during the day time, the pilgrim and the visitor can find engagements to occupy him all the time he stays here.

CHAPTER IX.

The facilities in the shrine

Nanguneri is situated on the 18th mile from Tinnevelly on the Tinnevelly Nagercoil trunk road. Buses are always plying between Tinnevelly and Nagercoil passing through Nanguneri where they halt for half an hour. If the tourist to the Cape or Trivandrum does not want to break his journey here he may just get into this temple at any time and within half an hour pass round the various sannidhis and get into the bus again. Bus drivers oblige travellers by taking them to the temple and picking them up from there after half an hour.

If the tourist likes to stay on at Nanguneri he has a number of choultries which are very convenient for halting. The Nadamuni Chettiar's Chatram is a regular palace with all conveniences. Non-brahmins cannot have accommodation in this chatram but the Local-fund-chatram, close by, is a very convenient building where people of all communities can have lodging. Originally it was a Brahmin chatram endowed by a Madhwa Brahmin. It was later on handed over to the Taluk Board for the benefit of the public and is now thrown open to all communities. It has a comfortable hall upstairs and it affords all comforts being just opposite the temple and very near the

tank and the bazaar street. North Indians have a number of choultries for them and the Sayakkara pillais have got a palatial chatram for their own community. Besides there are the Kalakad Pannaiyar's Chatram buildings where any number of brahmins can have free boarding and lodging for a number of days In this group of buildings a separate enclosure is set apart for the lodging of sojourners of status. This building is always occupied by touring officers. Often some important local official occupies this building for many months and shuts off the door against any stranger. The author himself was a sinner of that kind as he occupied it free for more than a month. It has a very good well which forms the object of attraction for all camping officers. Any stranger can occupy it at any time without any introduction from anybody. The Dak bangalow at Nanguneri is one of the finest buildings in this part of the country and there is a servant in charge of it. He is given quarters near the bangalow and he is available at all times.

There is a big tank which is full of water for 7 or 8 months in the year and for the other 4 months in the year the jeer Uthu, a small tank within this big tank, affords water to the whole town. Anyhow the place is convenient only when the tank has water. In the summer the tank dries up and the summer heat is unbearable. So the pilgrim who

desires to attend a festival may choose any festival between the months of September and April. He must avoid the months from May to August.

There are good hotels at Nanguneri and the orthodox people can have good lot of prasadams in the temple and the mutt feeds all brahmins and gives food for being taken out also.

From here Nagercoil is about 30 miles and buses are always plying between Nagercoil and the Cape. There are through buses also between Tinnevelly and the Cape. So the tourist who comes this side can visit Nanguneri, Nagercoil and Trivandrum at a stretch. Near the Cape there is the famous shrine of Suchindram and near Nagercoil there is the Vaishnavite shrine of Tirupatisaram otherwise called Tiruvanprasaram. Near the Cape there is Vattakottai a place of archaelogical importance. Four miles from Nanguneri we have the Shenbagaramanalloor temple of great architectural importance. The Tirukurungudi temple, equally famous as the Nanguneri temple, is 8 miles from Nanguneri. The tourist can visit all these places at a stretch.

About 12 miles from Nagercoil there is the Neyyoor hospital conducted by the London Mission and there are very good surgeons who conduct surgical operations of all kinds. Doctor Somervelle of the Himalaya expedition fame,

a very popular and successful surgeon, is in charge thereof.

At Nagercoil itself there is a Salvation Army hospital at Putteri. This hospital is famous for its treatment of medical cases by Doctor Noble.

The women and children's hospital at Trivandrum is a very popular institution and it has on its staff a good number of lady doctors with foreign degrees and some of them are good surgeons. For treatment of women patients and for confinement this hospital is very convenient and it has a large number of beds and the attention is good.

The above facts are noted to give an idea of the importance of this part of the country. Somehow many people in the north have not visited even the Cape and many do not know that Trivandrum is fast becoming a second Mysore in appearance and has stolen a march over all other places in India in point of education and civilisation. In these days when we have cheap go-as-you-please tickets in the South Indian Railway it is very easy to tour over these parts and visit the places mentioned above and particularly visit Totadrinath and obtain his blessings.

CHAPTER X.

The vehicles, jewels and vessels in the temple

The vehicles in the temple are all gold plated ones. The most important of them are the golden car and the golden chappram. The golden car was made during the time of Chinna Satagopa Ramanujaswami and Chinna Pattarbiranswami and it was used for the first time somewhere by 1904. It costed two lakhs of Rupees and it is the only one of its kind in Southern India. Various images are worked into it. The portion just over the arches is coated with solid silver plate and the upper portion of the car is coated with gold plates on which are carved the Dasavatharam and various Gods and the swami who was responsible for its construction. The two wooden horses that are fixed to the front of the car are very fine and symmetrical and they are life-like and the wooden driver is also of a fine type. The sikaram or crown also is made of gold plate. The whole car is made on the model of the Goratham which we meet with in many other temples but this one is made with all consideration for tasteful finish and as it is plated with gold the procession of the God on this car in the morning sun between 7 and 10 a. m. is really superfine.

The vehicle next in importance is the gold chappram. It is a very beautiful chappram fully

gold plated and the sikaram made of gold is a very elegant one. It costed over Rs 30,000. On the day the Perumal and the Nachiar start in procession on this chappram very valuable jewels are worn by the Perumal and the Nachiar. The Perumal wears at that time a crown set with five very big emeralds all round. The size of each emerald is one and a half times that of a half anna coin and each has different shades of brilliancy. One is deep green another leaf green and so on. The Nachiar wears good lot of diamonds and the Perumal also wears jewels of enormous value. One peculiar thing in this temple is that when these idols are taken in procession they are not loaded with flowers and hid from appearance as is done in many other temples. They are scantily decorated with motely flowers like Rose Davanam Malli Champaka and other varieties as not to conceal the idols or their jewels. This chappram procession starts at 5 p. m. and very soon darkness sets in and as gas lights are tabooed they go on illuminating the chappram by a very subdued and agreeable pink coloured mattappu (incandescent firework). The glittering golden chappram, the very valuable jewels made of diamonds and emeralds and the beautiful gold and green hangings on the chappram — all these add a brilliance which is arresting in the extreme. While the car is magnificent the chappram is more elegant

The other vehicles, the Kudiraivahanam, the Hamsavahanam, Anaivahanam, Garudavahanam, the Kamalavahanam, Seshavahanam, Gajalakshmi vahanam, the Chandraprabai, the elephant howdah and some palanquins are all gold plated. The Kilivahanam, the Hanumarvahanam and some palanquins are silver plated.

There are a good lot of gold vessels and gold and silver lamps in the temple and they need not be described here.

Many of the jewels in the temple are of very high value. Rare saphires, pearls, emeralds and diamonds of enormous value are found among them. As the management was in the hands of the jeers they had been adding to them and re-setting them in the most tasteful manner with the result that the fine taste and finish exhibited in the make of some of them cannot be met with in other temples.

The mutt has also a huge gold palanquin, an ivory palanquin and a big silver howdah for being placed on the elephant when the jeer is led in procession. The ivory palanquin is the gift of the Maharajah of Travancore and the silver howdah that of the Maharajah of Rewah. Besides there are lot of gold suratis, umbrellas and other paraphernalia. The golden vessels and the golden lamps in the mutt are even more valuable and massive than those in the temple.

The mutt has some jewels of enormous value. They are all the property of the mutt. The temple and the mutt maintain separate inventories for the respective jewels in their custody. The jewels in the mutt are used for the Gods on special occasions and they are brought into the mutt immediately. The most important of the mutt jewels are the crown set with emeralds, already described, the Nachiar's diamond makara kanti, and the ruby makara kanti for the Perumal, a fine jewel made by Mamandoor swami, the diamond-set abayastams and legs, the big Namam for Totadrinath, made of diamonds and rubies of big size, the diamond jadaisingaram, rakkudi and head decorations, all made of diamonds, pearl garlands with diamond and emerald pendants, diamond nose ornaments and Perumal's yagnopavitam with a very valuable mogappu.

Some of the pitambarams that have been purchased for the Nachiar by the previous jeer and some of his predecessors are very costly and grand.

The jewels and the cloths of the temple are in the temple Karivelam and those of the mutt are in the mutt treasury. The jewels and the vehicles can always be seen by the visitor with the sanction of the jeer who is generally very obliging in this respect.

CHAPTER XI.

The Thengalais and the Vadagalais

When Buddhism and Jainism were gathering to them lot of adherents through their preachings to the common people in the vernaculars the Saivite Nayanmars and the Vaishnavite Alwars took the cue and started their preachings also in the vernacular. The Vaishnavite Alwars composed their prabandams in Tamil and the philosophic doctrines preached through them and the fine prosody employed therein soon attracted the attention of the common people and the learned alike. The Vaishnavite brahmins who recited them used to attract hundreds of listeners and Saint Nadamuni himself was so far captivated by these prabandams that he introduced a recitation of these prabandams into the Srirangam temple as one of the items of worship. Learned scholars began to learn and imbibe the truths enshrouded in these prabandams and as these were men learned in Sanskrit also a sort of mixed scholarship arose in the country. Scholars began to expound and criticise philosophical truths in the light of the interpretation that they gave to either of them. Pillailokachariar and others were learned both in Sanskrit lores and Tamil prabandams and Vedanta Desikar also who was an exponent of philosophy as taught by Mahabashya and other Sanskrit works learnt the prabandams and wrote

critical works thereon. The result was that differences of opinion crept into the interpretation given to these texts. Vedanta Desikar and his school purely relied on Sanskrit works on philosophy like Bashya and other treatises and Pillailokacharya and others relied on prabandams for their authority. After all both the schools dealt only with the Vaishnavite philosophy. But as the prabandams were composed as hymns scholarly style and prosody and the sort of composition used as panegyrics and praise of God were brought into play and these have shrouded the philosophical truths in shades of doubt. These doubts were cleared in different manner and that was responsible for the cleavage of opinion among scholars.

The philosophy as expounded by Ramanuja is qualified monism. It advocates the oneness of God with attributes. Both Adwaitins and Visishtadwaitins believe that God alone exists but the Adwaitin regards the individual souls and matter as unreal or illusory. The Visishtadwaitin believes they are attributes of the one God or Shakti and they are subject to the control of the one God or Brahmam with various manifestations.

The Adwaitin places the purification of the soul as the most important plank in his philosophy

and to him Jnanayoga is the chief means of salvation. The Visishtadwaitin or the Vaishnavite, to put it in common terms, places importance on Bhakti as the means of salvation. The latter believes that God is not a tyrant who exacts from him hard tasks like all sorts of penance and fasts which are not generally adoptable by common men and the high amount of philosophic knowledge of the soul and the Brahmam which only a high form of philosophic research and erudition can acquire but he believes that Bhakti or devotion to be the chief means of securing God's mercy. We should have absolute and selfless devotion towards God and as he knows what is good for man and what he deserves he comes to his rescue according to the trust placed on him. This belief of the Vaishnavite dispenses with disabilities due to birth and illiteracy and social status. All men can aspire to God's mercy. Only the very easy and selfless sort of trust and devotion are required. This belief not only does good to the individual but also to the society as it makes all people equal in the eyes of God and a sort of brotherhood is fostered thereunder.

In this sort of devotion there is a further stage where the devotee surrenders himself to God. This process is called *Prapatti* or self-surrender. It consists of the devotee surrendering himself to the Acharya with prayers to lead him to God's mercy.

The Acharya in turn recommends the devotee to Srilakshmi as the mediator to intercede on behalf of the devotee and recommend him to God's mercy. The reader must kindly notice the important place Sri Lakshmi occupies in the process She is considered by the Thengalais as a separate living being as any one of us and so the Acharya prays to her to lead the devotee to God's grace. The Vadagalais consider Lakshmi as inseparable from God and as existing as mercy in God's heart. Instead of praying to Lakshmi alone in the first instance the Acharya whom the devotee approaches prays in turn to God having Lakshmi in His Vakshas (heart).

So the difference between both the sects consists in the nature of Lakshmi as understood by each. This small difference need not separate people who otherwise will swear by the same creed. Vested interests like perquisites and worldly benefits disturb their brahminical temperament and they use the very harmless and well meant Ramanujadayapathram or Srisailadayapathram as missiles to attack each other with. It must be understood that these are invocations to God in honour of the teachers of the respective sects.

To the onlooker the Vadagalai brahmin is a person wearing the namam with a parabole for its base and the Thengalai one wearing the namam with a triangle for its base. To the scholar the difference

between the two sects consists in the nature of the secret doctrine of *prapatti.* There is not much of doctrinal difference between both the sects. The Vadagalais recite prabandams in their religious functions and the Thengalais also recite Vedaparayanam in similar functions. Still the courts have been disgusted with the brain-racking developments of degenerate Vaishnavism and the public make easy fun of these sects which include some of the best brains of the present age. The many well-known leaders of thought, politics and industry in both the sects are not mere freaks of nature to be trifled with but colour of faith given to subtle differences in logic has absorbed the rank and file in unseemly quarrels combined with a levity and absence of thought over the future and these men are helpless onlookers when their kith and kin are running amok.

It is not even now impossible to bring the two communities together if the leading members of both agree on a common programme of unifying propaganda work. The various disputes regarding tirtham and adhyapakam and other business which are the fruitful sources of difference must be decided by a mixed committee of the members of both the sects. Public opinion must exert itself and impress on the jeers in the various places the impressive necessity of carrying on with even-handed consideration towards the votaries of both the sects and

all attempts to misapply temple or mutt funds towards expenses connected with these trivial and disgraceful quarrels over which enlightened men have to hang their heads in shame must be put a stop to and legislation if necessary be made with a view to secure equality of treatment being meted out to members of both the communities within the temples. In the Muhammadan mosques the king and the peasant are awarded the same treatment. In our temples this first thirtham, garlanding and other marks of respect which had importance formerly on account of the scholarly or religious attainments of a former recipient or the pious philanthropy of an influential devotee are continued without meaning even when the present recipients have absolutely no deserts for that distinction. These preferential services may be stopped if necessary by a legislative enactment as it is legal quibble to treat them as civil rights when common sense dictates the other way.

CHAPTER XII.

The future of the Mutts

It is often suggested that, in the progressive times we are in, the mutts can play no useful purpose and they have outlived their times. It is worthwhile to examine the mentality that is responsible

for this irresponsible idea. We find the world disturbed by economic troubles, trade barriers, industrial enterprises, unemployment schemes and political adjustments of a highly democratic nature. Some of us see in them the utter uselessness of our isolation steeped, as we are considered to be, in meditative and complacent self-sufficiency, relying solely on our hoary religious beliefs and contented expectation over the future which may take our soul nearer God. Indian history read aright does not show a single instance when Hindus had been found wanting in practical methods of life on account of their following their glorious religion. The canker in the body politic had always been the want of unity among the various sects of the same community and the utter inability to pull together in a common political or social cause; but religion had been a unifying bond between people of different communities. Kasi and Rameswaram have the same sort of religious significance and importance for the North Indian and the South Indian and the brahmin and the non-brahmin. Are we to throw off such a useful agency in our materialistic thought of the present day exigencies. For one self - respector amongst us we have hundred thousands of devout believers and our country cannot on that account of the survival of a few malcontents among us be considered to have gone religion-dry. The craving of our people for intensive

religious service may not be quite apparent on the surface of an agitated state of things but the body of the community is sound and the dormant religious temperament will soon show out when a better state of things dawns upon the country. Then and then only the necessity for the existence of agencies to cater for the religious yearnings of people will be felt keenly. Then it will not be easy to start institutions and new institutions cannot also enjoy the confidence of people. Past history, past tradition and permanency of work, all these will make the existing institutions beneficial and useful. Institutions once destroyed are never reborn and there has been a popular dictum with Hindu benefactors that preservation is more laudable than gift.

We see now-a-days it is very difficult to find a small amount for bringing into existence a small library or a small bajana institution. The old habit of setting apart a small amount for religious and charitable purposes has been given up by our people and expensive channels of non-religious activities have taken hold of our people. So we must only be thankful to our ancestors for having brought into existence these institutions which we must at least desist from harming in any manner. If not now, a time will soon come when there will be an intense religious revival and these mutts will then play their important role.

The indifferent person who has not got into a mutt may be making cheap gibe at the expense of these mutts. Bnt only the other day I noticed a very important personage, whom all India respects for his high position and culture bowing before the jeer in this mutt. This sort of reverence to the ascetic is born of our flesh and we cannot shake it off for centuries. If the body gets ill it can be cured of the illness by administering medicines and if the state of things in a mutt or temple is bad it can be improved by weeding out the sources of disorder.

Further our syndicates and senates and Government and District Board managed institutions have not facilitated the specialisation in Sanskrit or the high acquisition of high original thinking either in literary or religious spheres and it is in these mutts work of that kind must go on. A Radhakrishnan has become famous by interpreting the Indian philosophy in western languages and western methods. How many are there in these mutts whose exuberance of religious thoughts does not reach public notice and whose silent work is communicated from the teacher to the disciple and so on until some professor who is in the line acquires some knowledge from them and makes it public property. No Government or Board grant is given to these mutts. The original matadhipathies have on account of their purity and sacred knowledge acquired funds

and properties to maintain themselves and their institutions and enable them to carry on their work. Government help has ceased after the rule of the Hindu Rajahs has ended. So all that these mutts require now is to be left alone.

It cannot be denied that there had been some dissatisfaction towards the state of affairs in some particular mutts. But there are mutts like the Vanamamalai mutt where things are highly satisfactory and a general scheme of administration need not be devised for these mutts. Still the disciples of the mutt can with the cooperation of the head of the mutt bring into existence a board of disciples whose advice on important matters the jeer may requisition when necessity arises. For instance the jeers of the Vanamamalai mutt make it a point to consult well informed opinion on secular matters and they are receptive to useful suggestions. Where there was an occasion recently to appoint a new agent the jeer invited a retired Government official all the way from Srirangam for the position. Recently that gentleman died and his place had to be filled up. There were a good number of aspirants for the place but the jeer pitched upon a very deserving Government official who was verily surprised by the unexpected offer and the choice was good as this gentleman had acquired a reputation for rectitude, humility and conscientious work as office holder in some other institutions. The jeer's eyes are over each and every small item of business in the administration of the mutt both religious and secular. To make his administration better recognised as satisfactory and beneficial he

may appoint a council of members whose advice he can commandeer on occasions of necessity. There can be no difficulty of choosing a board of such members. Originally the stalattars had some voice in the management of the mutts and the temples. Later their power gradually waned and to-day there is nobody whose counsel the matadipathy can commandeer on occasions. The usual satisfactory administration and the natural good qualities of the head and heart of the recent jeers of Nanguneri had been the safeguard against any discreditable developments that could happen easily. At any rate there will not be much harm to the status of the jeer as a religious head if even he is influenced to appoint men of his own choice and confidence to counsel him on occasions.

There are gentlemen of wealth and position at Nanguneri and other places who are ever ready to offer their help when sought after. In this way we can suggest a board of people resident near at hand if it is found impracticable to pitch upon outsiders. As a necessary safeguard their presence may be requisitioned by the jeer only when the latter chooses to do so. Judged from recent history the jeers are not wanting in their good sense, and abiding interest for the well-being of the institutions under their charge.



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